

ISSUE N° 6
SEP/OCT
2011
BIMONTHLY
PUBLICATION



DIABOLIQUE

\$9.98



UNIVERSAL'S
**THE
THING**

AN IN-DEPTH CONVERSATION WITH
DIRECTOR, MATTHIJS VAN HEIJNINGEN

100
YEARS OF
VINCENT
PRICE



During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher...

-Poe

DIABOLIQUE

ISSUE Nº 6
SEP/OCT
2011

HORROR FOR THE CONNOISSEUR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Editor: Robert J. E. Simpson
robert@horrorunlimited.com
Assistant Editor: David L. Rattigan
david@horrorunlimited.com
Publisher: Dima Ballin, Horror Unlimited
dimo@horrorunlimited.com
Director of Marketing: Greg Petaludis
greg@horrorunlimited.com
Design and layout: Dima Ballin, Winning Edge, Inc.

Contributors this issue:

Adrian Smith, Steve Head, Matt Jamieson, Tony Earnshaw, Rod Webber, Keri O'Shea, Michelle "Izzy" Gagliana, David L. Rattigan, Robert J.E. Simpson. All text © 2011 to the individual authors.

Submission guidelines for Diabolique are available at
www.horrorunlimited.com/submissions.html

Images are courtesy of, and/or © of:

Tom Stockman, Richard D. Squires, Robert Taylor and Sara Waugh, Matt Jamieson, Jason V Brock, Lisa Magyari of Diviant Art, Ian Ogilvy, Cine-Excess, Image Entertainment, Odeon Entertainment, Universal Pictures, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Home Video, The Horror Unlimited Collection.



Horror Unlimited Marketing Division
150-50 Coolidge Avenue
Briarwood NY 11432-1622
Phone: (718) 658-5020
Email: info@HorrorUnlimited.com
Website: www.HorrorUnlimited.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/diaboliquemagazine

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial	4
Film Review: Witchfinder General	6
by Adrian Smith	
Forming The Thing: A conversation with Matthijs van Heijningen Jr	10
by Steve Head	
100 Years of Vincent Price	18
by Matt Jamieson	
The House of Price: A conversation with Roger Corman	30
by Robert J.E. Simpson	
Conquering the Worm: A conversation with Ian Ogilvy	40
by Robert J.E. Simpson	
Michael Reeves: The Forgotten Horror Prodigy	46
by Tony Earnshaw	
Jane Asher on Masque of the Red Death	50
by Rod Webber	
A Slice of Price	58
by Keri O'Shea, Michelle "Izzy" Gagliana, Adrian Smith, David L. Rattigan, Robert J.E. Simpson	

Amongst the great horror actors of the 20th century (Karloff, Lugosi, Lon Chaney Sr, Lon Chaney Jr, Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing etc.) few had the lasting impact of Vincent Price. Born to a wealthy family of confectioners, Price's education took him to Europe to study art, and he carried the sensibilities of European culture with him throughout the rest of his career. A fine serious actor, his move into horror probably robbed him of more serious recognition, but it gave him a platform on which to build and reach out to multiple generations. His love of art was so important to him that he became a buyer for Sears, believing that every home in America ought to be able to afford one original piece of art. He was a gourmet chef, regularly appearing on television, writing cookbooks, and sending that aspect of his life up in *Theatre of Blood*. He oozed sophistication and had a voice to die for.

This year would have seen Vincent's 100th birthday and we've allowed ourselves the indulgence of joining in the celebrations of one of the most beloved of horror personalities. Matt Jamieson travelled to St Louis for the Vincentennial celebrations and provides and exclusive report, including an interview with Vincent's daughter and biographer, Victoria.

There's plenty of interviews this issue as we sought to get to know Vincent and the working environments. Rod Webber talks exclusively to actress Jane Asher about the making of *Masque of the Red Death*, and I spoke with that film's director, and regular VP collaborator Roger Corman. The Blu-ray debut of Vincent's finest genre performance in *Witchfinder General* gave us the opportunity to talk to co-star Ian Ogilvy, while Adrian Smith appraises the film and Tony Earnshaw looks at the short career of *Witchfinder* director Michael Reeves.

We wrap up our print tribute with a selection of short pieces looking at some of the more overlooked parts of Vincent's horror career, courtesy of some of our regular contributors. We'll be adding a few more to our exclusive online content, and Robert Talbot's look at Vincent's Italian films is there too.

And in case you were worrying this was all Vincent this issue, Steve Head has been chatting with Matthijs Van Heijningen Jr, the director of the impending prequel to John Carpenter's *The Thing*. A film which is destined to divide opinion regardless of merit.

On a separate note, I have to extend my personal thanks to all the staff here over what has been a difficult few months for me. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to David Rattigan in particular, who has been helping out during my various periods of illness and computer failure! David has been contributing regularly and has recently joined us officially as Assistant Editor. Welcome on board!

Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed that the last issue was a month later than usual – this was due to restructuring here at the mag, and our gaining a new distributor. We've had to rejig our scheduling, and are now planning several months further ahead than before – I've had to plan our January issue some 8 months ahead for example. I don't know how we'll cope if we ever go monthly!

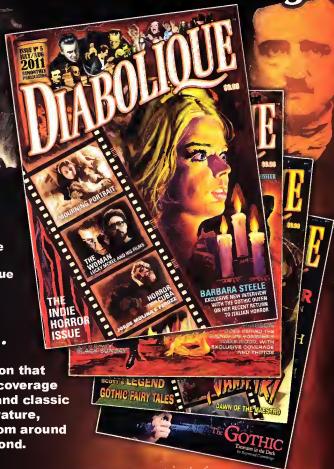
We'd love to hear from you too, with your thoughts on the mag, the web content and our future issues. Details are on p67. See you in two months.

Robert J.E. Simpson
Editor
robert@horrorunlimited.com



EDITORIAL

DON'T MISS OUT ON FUTURE ISSUES
Subscribe Today!



Prepare to be
stimulated and
entertained when
you subscribe to the
DIGITAL or PRINT
Editions of Diabolique
Magazine!

***Diabolique
Magazine is...***

The *only* publication that
features in-depth coverage
of contemporary and classic
horror in film, literature,
history and art, from around
the world and beyond.

**"Diabolique definitely brings back the feeling of joy and
awe you experienced when you cracked open your first
horror magazine... truly the cream of the crop"**

- Sarah Jahier, *fatally-yours.com*

www.HorrorUnlimited.com
to subscribe or to purchase individual copies!



Release Date: 13/06/2011
 Company: Odeon Entertainment
 Cat No: ODNBF001
 Barcode: 5060082516078
 Dealer Price: £14.97 BluRay
 Cert: 18
 Running Time: 83 minutes
 Director: Michael Reeves
 Starring: Vincent Price, Ian Ogilvy & Rupert Davies



Extras include:

AUDIO COMMENTARY with Michael Reeves biographer Benjamin Halligan and Director Michael Armstrong.
DOCUMENTARY: *The Blood Beast: The Films of Michael Reeves* (24 Mins)
DOCUMENTARY: *Bloody Crimes: Witchcraft and Matthew Hopkins* (24 Mins)
VINCENT PRICE on Aspel & Company (10 Mins)
INTRUSION: Michael Reeves Short Film with optional commentary. (Never before commercially released)
ALTERNATE SCENES from the Export Version.
THEATRICAL TRAILER and Stills Gallery.
ALTERNATE US OPENING and closing Credits.

WITCHFINDER GENERAL

IN 1968 a young, promising film director approached legendary exploitation film producer Tony Tenser, who was still revealing in his international success with Roman Polanski's *Repulsion*, with a script for a psychological horror film called *The Dark*. It was to star David Bowie and depict the social and sexual ambiguities of a group of teenagers who hold a séance in a disused house, only for them to be murdered one by one, *Ten Little Indians*-style, by a mysterious killer, who would eventually turn out to be one of the teenagers themselves. Tenser thought the script showed promise, and gave Michael Armstrong, the director in question, the green light. He then approached American International Pictures for financial assistance, and Armstrong's artistic vision soon drowned under the weight of their demand for changes. AIP insisted on his casting *Beach Party* kid Frankie Avalon and Boris Karloff in the lead roles, despite there being no part in the script for a wheelchair-bound octogenarian, and that all elements of the sexual complexity, flashback sequences and deep psychological exploration of the film be cut. Tenser made Armstrong shoot the film in an empty hotel in Southport that was too clean and neat, and when Karloff proved to be too ill to fulfil his AIP contract, Dennis Price, another faded star, was brought in instead, playing a wheelchair-bound elderly detective who may be the murderer. Once the film was completed it was cut to shreds by AIP and, in a final insult, renamed *The Haunted House of Horror*.

Less than a year earlier Michael Reeves also struggled with interference from AIP, this time on the set of *Witchfinder General*. Their main condition on providing co-financing had been on casting another of their contract stars, Vincent Price, as the Witchfinder Matthew Hopkins, and the renaming of the film to *The Conqueror Worm*, to fool American audiences into thinking it was another Cornman-style Poe adaptation. Despite this Reeves managed to get a performance out of Price that was closer in tone to his original casting choice of Donald Pleasence, even if he had to put Price through hell to get there, famously ignoring the actor when a fall from his horse bruised both his ego and his coccyx, in the hope that the rage and resentment Price would feel would come across on screen. It did. Price gave the performance, if not of his career, then certainly of his last thirty years, when he was otherwise given to hamming it up in a camp caricature of his for-

mer sinister self (see *Theatre of Blood* or *The Abominable Doctor Phibes* if you don't believe me). Despite the bad experience, once Price saw the final cut of the *Witchfinder General* he was so impressed that he immediately began planning to work with Reeves again on a period-horror called *The Oblong Box*.

Of course this is not just Vincent Price's film. Ian Ogilvy, who starred in every film Reeves had made, is a revelation here, as his character goes from youthful optimism at the first flowering of love through to eventual despair and bestial brutality. Reeves also cannily cast veteran actor Rupert Davies as a country vicar who is tortured and killed by Hopkins. Davies was not known as a horror film actor, which worked in his favour in both this and his most infamous film, Pete Walker's Home Counties cannibal epic *Frightmare*. Patrick Wymark, who had impressed in *Repulsion* as the sleazy landlord, makes a cameo here as a wart-ridden and thoroughly unpleasant Oliver Cromwell. It is the inclusion of these familiar British character actors (not forgetting Steptoe himself, Wilfred Brambell) in this English landscape that helps one forget that Price was actually an erudite American sophisticate. He blends right in with the people, the grime and the blood.

Sadly Reeves died of an accidental overdose shortly after the release of *Witchfinder General*. Price still made *The Oblong Box*, directed by AIP stalwart Gordon Hessler instead. Michael Armstrong went on to forge a career for himself despite his experiences, and made the sex comedy *Eskimo Nell* as a satire on the exploitation film industry of Wardour Street, in London's Soho. He is present on this new Blu-ray release of *Witchfinder General* as he was a friend and contemporary of Reeves, and can personally remember what it was like to work for Tony Tenser and AIP, whilst try-

ing to hold on to your artistic vision. Armstrong provides the commentary track on both the feature film and an early short, *Intrusion*, made when Reeves was just sixteen, along-



Behind-the-scenes of the witch burning scene



side Reeves' biographer and academic Benjamin Halligan.

Fortunately for Reeves he had a better experience with AIP than Armstrong, as they loved the film and did not make any attempt to alter his vision beyond the casting change and the insistence on a bit more sex appeal. It is unlikely that anyone then would have suspected that *Witchfinder General* would go on to become a British horror classic, described by Jonathan Rigby in his important survey of the British horror film *English Gothic* as "Every bit as nihilistic as *Night of the Living Dead*" and by Alan Bennett as "The most persistently sadistic and morally rotten film I have seen," a review which no doubt Reeves would have been very pleased with. The film shows that violence breeds violence, and it is every bit as shocking, visceral and unpleasant as real violence is, not the cartoon-style violence of say a Bond film, or even the Hammer films of the time. The Kensington Gore may have been the same, but this was miles away from the cosy European fantasy world of the Hammer gothics. This IS England, Reeves seems to be saying. This is a film which is anti-establishment and anti-war, using graphic horror in the same way that contemporary American films such as *Soldier Blue* or *The Wild Bunch* were seen as protests against the Vietnam war. In many ways *Witchfinder General* is seen as perhaps the only British western, so the comparisons are fitting.

Although *Witchfinder General* has been available on home video and DVD before, it has always suffered slightly

in the presentation. The UK DVD was a poor transfer, featuring the export versions of scenes cut into the feature (mainly extra nudity) and previously cut scenes of violence, but at a VHS quality that was rather jarring. In 2007 MGM put out the uncut film on their R1 Midnite Movies range, which used a new HD transfer but missed the export scenes. This new Blu-ray from Odeon Entertainment features that same HD transfer, only this time you can see it in HD and it looks amazing. The picture is occasionally soft, which one assumes was present in the original print, but in general it looks detailed and every bit as clear and richly coloured as we now expect from Blu-ray. Also available are those export scenes alongside the alternate opening and closing US credits, where Price provided some Edgar Allen Poe narration.

Rounding out the extras are the *Eurotika* documentary episode on Michael Reeves, first broadcast on UK TV in 1999 and featured on the first R2 DVD release; and a new documentary on the real tales of witchcraft and punishment in the Middle Ages which provides fascinating historical context to the film itself. Another nice inclusion is Vincent Price's chat show appearance on *Aspel and Company* from 1984, where they discuss his career, in particular the success of Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, and host Michael Aspel asks the rather inane question "How many times have you played a vampire?", clearly not having done much research. Sadly they have only included the Price extract itself, presumably for rights reason, rather than the full episode which also featured Dudley Moore and Lulu. Also missing from this release, again presumably for rights reasons, is the commentary track recorded by Ian Ogilvy and Philip Waddilove, the film's producer, which is present on the R1 DVD.

This new *Witchfinder General* Blu-ray should be considered an essential purchase for any fan of classic British cinema. Reeves created a new type of horror film and demonstrated that horror is horrific, not campy and fun, notably with his use of a truly pessimistic conclusion, in much the same way as George Romero and Sam Peckinpah were doing across the Atlantic. Whilst British cinema has given us hundreds of horror films, there are only, perhaps, a handful that can be considered truly important films and *Witchfinder General* is on that list. It also serves as a sad reminder that British cinema lost a potentially huge director in Michael Reeves, who could successfully balance an artistic vision with commercial sensibilities and may have been instrumental in a second British New Wave, perhaps avoiding the decline and near collapse of the industry just a few years later.



by ADRIAN SMITH

VINCENT PRICE

IAN OGILVY

RUPERT DAVIES

WILFRID BRAMBELL

IL GRANDE INQUISITORE



EASTMANCOLOR

con **PATRICK WYMARK**
ROBERT RUSSEL
HILARY DWYER
in ante **MICHAEL REEVES**
regia di **TONY TENSER**

FORMING

a conversation with director;
MATTHIJS VAN HEIJNINGEN Jr



Time has redeemed John Carpenter's *The Thing*, a film once spurned by critics, now regarded a classic. The 1982 remake of Howard Hawks' 1951 production *The Thing from Another World* (based on author John W. Campbell's 1938 novella *Who Goes There?*) presented one of the creepiest monsters—that amorphous, deforming thing from another world—in the history of film. Its horrific images proved more indelible than its initial critical reception. What John Carpenter perpetrated upon the few who saw it in 1982 has since spawned a life on home video, and now Universal Pictures has been deemed it worthy of a prequel.



SET FOR RELEASE ON OCTOBER 14th, *The Thing* stars Mary Elizabeth Winstead (*Black Christmas*, *Final Destination 3*) as Kate Lloyd, a graduate student studying at Norway's research station in Antarctica. When the discovery of a rather large object not too far from the base and buried deeply in the snow causes some concern, things get a bit, you know, out of hand. Also caught in this sub-zero bloodbath is Joel Edgerton (*Animal Kingdom*), Ulrich Thomsen (*Centerion*) and Eric Christen Olsen (*NICS: Los Angeles*).

The challenge of honoring the prior films while creeping the hell out of a new generation is in the hands of first-time feature director Matthijs van Heijningen Jr. *Diabolique* spoke with him about the making of *The Thing*.



Those who don't follow commercial production haven't really heard of you before. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? And how did you come to the attention of "the powers that be" in Hollywood?

I was born and raised in Amsterdam, Holland. My father is, in Holland, quite a famous producer. So I'd been brought up in filmmaking. I was always in the surroundings of movies. But making a movie in Holland is very, very difficult because it's all subsidized and there's no money, and they're actually not very good screenwriters. So I made short films when I was, like, twenty, but I could not make a living out of those short films. So I sort of accidentally fell into the world of commercials, at first just to make money, because I thought, well you know, to be shooting every month—that's just good as going to school. And then I sort of started to like it because I didn't treat

THE THING



them as commercials, but just as little short films. So it was always a little bit of a, you know—and I've done this for like twelve years now—it was always like practicing. Just, you know, because you can do a commercial about dinosaurs, or spaceships. And then these commercials won prizes, and then people in Los Angeles asked me over. So I did commercials, and I met agents, and then I met Zach Snyder.

How long ago was that?

That was about five years ago. I've been in the States for about five years now.

Zach Snyder was also a commercial director.

Yes, Zach also came out of the commercial world. And he saw, I think, some potential in me. And so we started talking about projects. And that's where *Army of the Dead* started. You probably know there was this movie called *Army of the Dead*.

It was dropped by Universal.

Yes, I think it was in 2008, you know, when the [economic] crisis broke.

What exactly happened with it?

It was this crazy \$75-million zombie thing. And the studio just pulled out because of the crisis. And they didn't believe it would make that much money in return. But it's actually through Zach that I sort of got a little bit of a grip on Hollywood.

*Do you think there's still life in *Army of the Dead*? Is there any chance Universal might revive the project or, since Zach has a close relationship with Warner Brothers, have another studio pick it up out of turnaround?*

Yes, it depends on how [*The Thing*] does. But yeah, I think [Universal] still likes it. And Zach still likes it. I think it's going to be a little tricky because *The World of Z* is coming out, which might be sort of conflicting. It's another big, big zombie movie. But, you know, it's not dead completely.

Being that your commercials don't particularly relate to the horror genre, is the horror genre something you relate to as a fan? Is it the genre you're particularly drawn to as a course for your career?

Yes and no. I mean, when I was young I was sort of captured by Kafka, and those sort of dramatic stories that starts normal and then awkwardly changes in sort of a supernatural way, or something weird. I was always attracted to them, but it doesn't mean it always has to be horror. I love essentially what Polanski does in *Repulsion*. ... When I was young, I was really fascinated by these kind of stories that have a tendency to go to horror, but they could also be other genres.

*As fans hope that your prequel to John Carpenter's *The Thing* is, in its way, worthy of the 1982 film, one of the elements you've taken great care in is establishing the tone of the film, and the importance of crafting a tension that builds slowly.*

Yes, I've always been drawn to the character-based elements of creating tension. Again, I must say, I'm influenced by Polanski and a personal drama, like in *Rosemary's Baby*, where it's character-driven-based, and you're just generally afraid of the other people. And so *The Thing* draws its terror from being in an isolated, confined space.

You mentioned there's a balance between tension and humor, as if something is astonishingly horrific and one tries to keep the tone in that area.

Yes, and in my experience, my commercials, they were odd and funny. In humor, it works at the right time, and I go back to Kafka because it's also funny, but it's also the tragic nightmare of the character. In comedy, it's sort of the same thing, where you start normally, and then things sort of get out of hand. And then you have to cope with the chaos around you, which can be funny if you do it like a comedy. Even in Polanski's movies there's always this sort of sense of dry humor. And with horror, what I



like, what I think is fascinating about horror, is that a normal situation turns slowly in a sort of unavoidable sense of chaos; it can be physically or mentally. I was always drawn to these kinds of stories. When I started doing [*The Thing*], I said to the producers: "We should build up slowly and slowly descend into this sense of unease and the feeling that something is awfully wrong. We don't know what it is exactly. And then when they find out halfway, they have to deal with this practical reality."

It takes a little while to set the table and create tensions slow-burn. In recent years, I would say horror films in general, and the studios that produce them, haven't opted for this method. It's as if The Shining couldn't be made today because it would be stamped as just too slow. Did you feel an expectation from fans to keep things slowly building, as in the prior films? Did the studio want you to speed things up?

What I always try to do is let the film evolve at its own pace. I think [*The Thing*] has its own pace. It's a science-fiction horror movie, so you have to explain how normal people are naturally super-critical of the supernatural, because they find this thing, you know? The sort of revealing of how terrible it is. I had to fight the studio a little bit because, you know, we have to do it slow. They have to slowly figure out that it's not even just alive but it's slowly copying.

The studio was okay with the pacing?

Absolutely not! They were like, "No! There's a disaster!" But I think I was able to postpone all that for as long as possible.

I've seen some photos of the production design, and I must say, the images are as disturbing as they should be. Just repulsive.

[Laughs] Thank you.

Were you involved in the production design process?

Yes. These creations, the artwork and models, we worked with a company called ADI. We just sat down and

started drawing, and then we did all kinds of clay models, just life-size clay models. And we were like, "Let's put a tentacle here. What happens if this skull breaks open?" It was great. It was sort of like playtime clay-molding sessions. It's where we sort of slowly developed the creatures. I was completely involved in that.

The script is by Ronald D. Moore and Eric Heisser. And it's not a remake of Carpenter's film. It's a prequel, which takes us right to the very beginning of Carpenter's film. Was a prequel always the plan?

Yes, when I came aboard, there was a script, and it was absolutely not working. My thinking was, for a European, the Norwegian story was always fascinating to me. So ... what happens to these poor Norwegians? Also, when I came aboard I said: "It has to be real Norwegians. We have to cast Norwegian actors, otherwise I'm not going to do it. It's ridiculous, you know, if Americans are going to play Norwegian."

Was there a stand-off on this?

I thought there would be. I actually thought that the studio was going to step out of it, because they're never going to allow ten Norwegians talking in an American movie.

They'd think it would be all subtitles.

Yes. And they said: "No, it's fine. But we need a few Americans, otherwise in America, nobody can identify with this movie." I said, "Well that's fine." And then we just looked at the movie, and these were the restrictions. But the parameters were sort of, if we do this movie, we have to be painfully accurate with what we see in John Carpenter's movie. And that was the challenge basically.

While filming the movie, was there a language barrier? How did you deal with the mix of English and Norwegian language on set?

We'd talked about how to handle this, but really, because I come from a small country—if you have a group of ten people and there are two English speaking people



in the room, you switch to English, and that's not odd. It's sort of a world language. But the moment they are separate, they just speak Norwegian. There are a fair amount of parts where they use the Norwegian to divide the group or cling together because they trust each other more than maybe the English-speaking parts of the characters. So it was actually a great device to just sort of enhance the paranoia between the people.

When talking about Antarctica, the first place I think of is Toronto.

[Laughs] Yes, it takes place in Antarctica, but we filmed in Toronto.

At Pinewood's studio complex there.

Yes. And we couldn't shoot in Antarctica, and we had to find a place that logistically worked, so it became Toronto and British Columbia. Part of the exteriors were in British Columbia.

Did you film in the same locations as the 1982 film?

Yes, we shot very close. Very near. And for our establishing exteriors we flew over and filmed the very same locations. It was amazing. We actually discovered the locations during our initial scouts. We were looking for places, and the pilot said, "Yeah, they shot JC's movie here." We did a fly-by and shot very close, but it was impossible to shoot with sets there because there were no roads anymore. So we did all the studio work, the interiors, in Toronto, and some of the exteriors in British Columbia.

In interviews, you've spent time spend quelling fans concerns about accuracy and the look and tone of the film, as there's an expectation to make it like John Carpenter's. Should people expect the same look and feel? Is that the challenge?

It is. Expectations just are. I think the big challenge was—and to be honest, sometimes, especially in pre-production, I woke up in a cold sweat thinking, "What am I doing? It's a masterpiece, and I'm sort of trying to min-

gle in this. And I'm one of those biggest fans, because otherwise I wouldn't have done it. But I realize it has to have elements of that movie and it has to be on its own as well. So I did it out of passion for JC's movie and then just did my own thing. And wasn't even consciously that this happened. You make something and it becomes your own thing. But I was always aware that it has to have elements that I liked about the original. That's somewhere in there as well.

Working with time and budget pressures is always nerve-wracking. And in particular, the pressure of working on a studio film. Was this something new to you? Were you prepared?

No, it wasn't new. I think if you do ten years of commercials for big companies, big companies are far worse than the studio. So the whole politics of getting them engaged in a way so much that they trust you and then they leave you alone, that's a sort of little political trick. I sort of know how to do that. They actually were almost not present on set, which was great [Laughs.]

Casting Mary Elizabeth Winstead was an interesting choice. Was the part always written for a female as the lead?

When I first came on board it was a male lead. But from the start I said, "I think it's dangerous, because Kurt Russell is such an iconic presence in John Carpenter's movie." If you try to do something the same, it gets confusing and people start comparing. I think that's such a dangerous route. Or you'd have to make it a nerd or something. But what are nerds doing on Antarctica?

He's so very masculine. And now, as the 1982 film is considered a classic, even iconic.

Yes, and you should not compete with that. One of my favorite movies is ... Ridley Scott's *Alien*. I said, "Why don't we make somebody as strong as Sigourney Weaver, as Ripley in *Alien*?" Because I like that movie so much, I sort of reconstructed the whole movie around her. And

I thought it was funny. It's a little bit the same as in *Alien*. She's a clever person. She has the brains, but not the physical presence. And she sees things happening earlier than everybody else. And how do you cope with a bunch of bearded Norwegians? So that was an interesting dynamic from the start.

And Ripley's character has backbone. She's the voice of sanity. Sort of even-keeled in a way. I imagine it was fun on set.

Yes, but I wasn't looking for sort of a "scream queen" or something. I was just thinking, How can we portray a character that's not even thirty as a scientist and has the sanity and the smarts and the wits to see through all this stuff? And try not to be a female or a woman but just a human being who is in that position?

Mary Elizabeth Winstead said in an interview that the character isn't sexualized. It's basically about the action and the tension, not about ogling her.

Totally, and I think she did an amazing job.

And Joel Edgerton as an American copter pilot.

He has a prominent role, but he's actually not the second character in the movie. Maybe more the third character. Ulrich Thompson became sort of the second lead. But it was also interesting watching *The Thing from Another World*, the Howard Hawks movie, where the sort of crazy scientist has an import role. We took elements from that movie as well.

Being the Norwegians discover the alien craft, is there a chance we'll see the alien in its pure, original form?

The logic in John Carpenter's movie is that they found it and they thawed it out and it probably wasn't in the best of moods. We hit on the idea that whatever the Norwegians found was in its original form. But it's completely speculative. It was maybe a life form from a different planet and it was a replication of another life form. But we see it in certain shapes in the block of ice when it wakes up; it has that form. So, it could well be that that's the original form, but you could speculate this for hours. [Laughs.]

Fans of Carpenter's film love the practical effects. Do they still apply, given that gory puppetry can be easily replaced by digital creations?

They asked John Carpenter: If he could remake his own movie, would he still use practical effects? He said no. Filmmakers use the current tools at their disposal. And what he worked with in 1982 was about the best effects they had at the time. I worked with a lot of practical effects, and this movie has a lot of practical effects. My complete intention was to do as much as possible. So we built all these practical things. And then while shooting it, because it's a modern-day movie and not a 1982 movie. There are some good practical effects in [the 1982] *The Thing*, but if you watch it real closely, there are some real

bad ones. And that's what I basically encountered while shooting [my film], because I shot everything practical, it does have a "this works, but this needs help." A cleaning-up. The first part really works, but this—splitting open would be so much more cool. And a lot of times it starts practical and then it's a takeover, or it's just enhanced or in some cases it's completely CG. It's a whole mixture. And I worked with the guy who did *District 9*, you know, all these prawns—Image Engine [was the company]—and these were all CG, and they just used guys in green suits with little crosses on their foreheads. And that looked pretty amazing. So I always know, okay, it's going to be practical to a certain point, and then it's going to be a blend.

A lot of science-fictions fans who haven't seen *The Thing from Another World* ought to really take a look at it, because so many elements of it are influential. In its way, it influenced *Aliens* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. It's kind of a science-fiction touchstone. And Hawks did it so well back in the fifties.

I have so much respect for *The Thing from Another World*. I tried to draw influence from it in my film as much as I could. I want to say, I sort of liked the guy who has to say, "Do not touch this thing because it's more important than we are." That we're merely an average being and in mortal danger here. That sort of "We've got to sacrifice ourselves for this amazing discovery not knowing how dangerous it actually is." That was an interesting look on that.

Which is sort of the decision the Wilford Brimley character made halfway through the 1982 *The Thing*. He figured there's no way out.

He becomes sort of the reason of the movie. In this movie, the hubris of the scientists causes everything. He sort of realizes we should basically kill ourselves because it's too dangerous, which is a great, great part. So I didn't want to copy that as well in my movie. But I can say that Mary Elizabeth Winstead's character—she becomes more of the reason, a little bit more like Ripley in *Alien*. There's a famous scene in *Alien* where they come back from the alien spaceship and she doesn't want to let those people in because they could be contaminated. And then Ash overrides it because he's been instructed. She may have an idea as to what's going on, as to what might happen. But choices are made that she, and the other, can then only respond to. They'll do whatever they can to survive. Or will they sacrifice themselves for humanity? Let me say, things get crazy.

by STEVE SLAUGHTER HEAD



AVAILABLE ON DVD AND VIDEO OR DEMAND

amazon.com

captainco.com

STORE NEAR YOU

Their journey begins...
when the world ends

"Elizabeth Ann Roberts, an expressive and convincing actress, shows particular promise as Sara, one of the few women left alive in the grim world of *Downstream*."

—Dan Taylor, Press Democrat

Downstream may be the best
post-apocalyptic film ever."

—Charles F. Rosenay,
Horror Happenings

"...furious, apocalyptic and darkly
satirical action film... Pure gold
ladies and gentlemen."

—Project Cyclops
Quiet Earth

Nominated for
Best Cinematography

—Milan International
Film Festival 2010

STORY BY PHILIP Y. KO

DOWNSTREAM



AMERICAN CLASSICS PRESENTS A FILM BY PHILIP Y. KO CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT STARRING ELIZABETH ANN ROBERTS "DOWNSTREAM" AND ROBERTS "DOWNSTREAM"
CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT
CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT
CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT CASTING BY JONATHAN HUNT



WWW.DOWNSTREAMTHEMOVIE.COM



FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND

Fear is Near
Available Fall 2011



FAMOUS MONSTERS THE ANNOTATED #1



Go behind the scenes with Editor-in-Chief, Forrest J Ackerman, complete with original layouts, handwritten notes, and never-before-seen kong-tent

DARK ARTS VOLUME 1

FAMOUS MONSTERS of Filmland



A celebration of some of the best horror, sci-fi, and fantasy artists in the business today. Along with the high-quality, full color ghoulish galleries, each section will include an interview with the artist, providing insight into just what inspires these maddeningly macabre masters

FAMOUS MONSTERS #71



The Battle of the Century! Bela vs. Lon... for ultimate monster supremacy in FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN. Take a trip back to 1970 for another of the "best" issues: #71



100
YEARS of
VINCENT PRICE
A VINCENTENNIAL



DEEP, PIERCING BLUE eyes, arched eyebrows, perfectly coiffed hair and that famous pencil-thin mustache. His name is known worldwide and millions more know him by sight. Some call him the king of Gothic horror.

But many fans don't know his birthplace is home to a group of devoted fans who are still celebrating his contributions to the world almost twenty years after his death.

St. Louis, Missouri was the setting for the Vincentennial Vincent Price Film Festival May 19th through 28th. The eight-day festival showcased 20 of Price's films, with discussions, Q&As and events at every film. Just as Price's career was varied, including over 300 movies, TV and radio shows among contributions in other media, the Vincentennial provided a varied program that went beyond just film screenings.

Four exhibits around the St. Louis area showcased Price's other contributions to the worlds of art, writing and film. The Vincent Price Legacy at the Sheldon Concert Hall displayed Price memorabilia and mementos of his life, while Vincent Price Presents at Star Clipper Comics in the Delmar Loop neighborhood exhibited Vince-inspired pieces of art. There were also plays and Super-8 showings in the city.

The occasion was the brainchild of Tom Stockman, of the website wearemoviegeeks.com. Normally, Stockman hosts a monthly festival of Super-8 films, and he was preparing for a Charles Bronson festival when a friend emailed him to suggest a festival for Vincent Price's 100th birthday. Instead of making it solely a festival of Super-8 films, Stockman took it to a non-profit group in the hope of a larger audience.

"The smartest thing I did was to present this idea to CinemaSt. Louis," Stockman said. "They quickly embraced the idea and agreed to throw the event under their umbrella. They're a top-notch group and have done a great job of raising funds, securing prints and exhibition rights, facilitating venues, et cetera."

The local tie is what really inspired Cinema St. Louis to help create the Vincentennial.

"He is from St. Louis. Vincent Price is one of the

Vincent Price's High School graduation (and 18th birthday) photo taken in May of 1909. From the Robert Taylor/Sara Vaughn Collection

After returning from England and his triumph in *Victrola Regalia* (1935-1937), Price met actress Edith Barrett. From the Richard D. Squires Collection

Vincent Price and third wife, Coral Browne. Publicity photo for *Time Express* (1991), in which the couple starred as ghostly hosts aboard a train that allowed people to go back and change their pasts. From the Richard D. Squires Collection

HI-POINTE

most famous horror actors with a massive legacy both in narrative and horror films," Chris Clark, artistic director of Cinema St. Louis, said. "We have a lot of great events planned. This week is gonna be great fun."

They took Tom's idea and ran with it, using it as the basis for their annual film festival — The St. Louis International Film Festival (SLIFF). Then, Vincentennial became its own festival, with more film events planned for the actual SLIFF in fall 2011.

The program kicked off on Thursday 19th with a screening of the seminal B-movie *The Fly* (1958) at the Missouri History Museum in Forest Park. The free event incorporated a Vincent Price trivia game titled *The Merchant of Menace*, a real-life "Fly" roaming around to terrify moviegoers and a giveaway of souvenir fly swatters.

"Vincent Price has a really huge fan base here," said 22-year-old Price fan Steve at the screening. "He has a lot of roots here in St. Louis, and I think that it's great there's a whole festival devoted to his works. He deserves to have a legacy like this."

The next day, two of Price's films were shown back-to-back at the nearby Hi-Pointe Theatre — *The Last Man on Earth* (1964) and *The Tingler* (1959). At *The Tingler*, the Cinema St. Louis team worked hard to make it an interactive experience, hoisting up a skeleton on wires and letting a beetle-like "Tingler" prop loose on the audience for maximum terror. The night ended with a video tribute from *Gremlins* director Joe Dante, who commented on *Tingler* as well as *House on Haunted Hill* (1959) another Price film by the same director, William Castle.

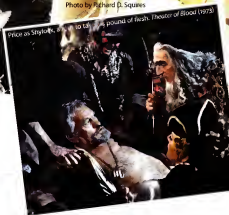
"These were two of Vincent's most iconic works in his career in the horror movie genre," Dante said in his taped tribute. "They weren't great art, but they were very entertaining."

A post-film discussion led by Film Forum's Bruce Goldstein revealed some of the methods used for *The Tingler* during its original run in theaters. Castle employed a concept he called "percepto," where certain seats (every third seat, according to Goldstein) were attached to buzzers to shock audience members. Goldstein also noted *The Tingler* was the first film to show an LSD trip with the





Life-size figures of Henry Jarrod (HOUSE OF WAX) and Dr. Phibes at The Sheldon Gallery. Created and loaned by Cortlandt Hull. Photo by Richard D. Squires



use of William

Castle's "psychedelorama"—one of the sequences where Price's character Warren trips out on acid, and the film itself goes to a tie-dye color.

"I'm only ever invited to present one thing—*The Tinger*," Goldstein said at the Friday screening. "I thought I was all 'Tingled' out, but to be able to honor Vincent Price, how could I resist? This is seriously the best *Tinger* team I've ever had."

The weekend showing of *Theatre of Blood* (1973) featured post-show discussion with The Vincent Price Exhibit webmaster Richard Squires. An authority on the actor, Squires has one of the biggest and best collections of Price memorabilia in the world, part of which was on display at the Sheldon in *The Legacy of Vincent Price*.¹

"I had created the website because after Vincent Price's death I had collected all of this stuff and had nothing to do with it," Squires said in an interview. "And also, after his death, so many young people weren't familiar, and Vincent Price had done so much in his life."

The legacy of Vincent Price was not limited to horror films.

¹ See Squires' full collection on his website, <http://vincentpriceexhibit.com>

He portrayed the villainous (and campy) Egghead in the sixties *Batman* television series. He was also an avid artist, cook, writer, advertiser and singer. He sang two songs for the 1986 Disney film *The Great Mouse Detective*, for which he provided the voice of the nefarious Professor Ratigan, was involved in the Alice Cooper song *Welcome to My Nightmare* (1975) and famously provided the chilling rap narrative for Michael Jackson's platinum hit song *Thriller* (1982).

"I've always been fascinated by him," Squires said. "Seeing him as just himself was fascinating to me. He was an inspiration who showed you really could have it all."



Squires thinks the reason Price kept coming back for more with Corman is because of his approach to directing.

"Corman was very 'hands off' as a director and let the actors do what they wanted," he said. "And Vincent really enjoyed that. Corman enjoyed Price's personality, so it was a perfect match."

On Sunday, Corman received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his varied contributions to Hollywood.

The week's festivities shifted to Brown Auditorium at nearby Washington University. Monday saw a double-bill of *Laura* (1944) and *Dragonwyck* (1946), the former accompanied by a discussion led by Washington University professors Gaylyn Studlar and David May. Tuesday saw a screening of the Sam Fuller western *The Baron of Arizona* (1950).

Things really began to pick up Wednesday, with a screening of the documentary *Vincent Price: The Sinister Image*, followed by an interview with film historian David del Valle, who hosted the documentary, and Victoria Price, the daughter of Vincent Price.

Victoria was the official Vincentennial guest of honor and the featured speaker for a multimedia presentation, *The Vincent Price Legacy: Reflections from a Daughter*, at the Missouri History Museum on her father's 100th birthday, Friday, May 27th. Many fans see her as a living link to her father, and she is more than happy to share her memories of him.

Speaking after the documentary screening, Victoria clearly understood the importance of her father's turn to Gothic horror in the 1960s.

"When Brando and James Dean and those actors came along in the fifties, actors like my dad, trained with classic diction and theater, they had sort of a choice to make," she said. "They could either become relics of the past or embrace a different genre. So he embraced that genre, and that really gave him a place to go. It was so suited for him."

Victoria said the reason people embraced Price's turn to horror was because it gave them a place to process their anxieties. "The sixties were a time of immense upheaval, and I think through those films people had an opportunity in a safe place to process everything that was going on," she said.

Victoria attributed Price's

On Saturday and Sunday, showings of the films *The Tomb of Ligeia* and *The Masque of the Red Death* (both 1964) had a pivotal player in Price's Hollywood career in attendance.

Acclaimed producer and director Roger Corman was on hand for two Q&A sessions about his films with Vincent Price, which included *Masque*, *Ligeia* and six other horrors, mostly based on works by Edgar Allen Poe.

Corman memorably described his first collaboration with Vincent Price, on *The House of Usher* (1960):

"The lead role was that of Roderick Usher, who was a very intelligent, highly educated, sensitive and slightly neurotic man. The name Vincent Price came to me immediately as the actor I wanted. We got along very well, and my main memory of him was that he had every attribute of Roderick Usher, except he wasn't quite that neurotic. He was also, to my surprise, a very funny man who was able to use that humor in the last of the Poe films we did."

The Masque of the Red Death (left)





Victoria Price at the Vincentennial, 2011

success to only two factors—the man himself and his fan base. “The studio publicity machines weren’t as powerful back then,” she explained. “The studios really couldn’t control their actors. You got what you got with my dad. He was that funny, generous, interactive, kind, witty, campy man that people interacted with, and that really was him.”

Thursday saw another double-bill screening, of *Witchfinder General* and *Champagne for Caesar*, followed by a discussion led by film critic Joe Williams of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. These two films are part of what has established Price as a Gothic horror master.

Victoria suggested some reasons why no actor today has come close to being a true Gothic horror icon in the vein of Vincent Price, Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff:

“Actors today aren’t really trained to be just that one type of thing, and they really resist being typecast. They want something that’s gonna guarantee popularity and longevity. The specialization is really what made my dad and them icons. If my dad’s career had not taken the turn that it did with *House of Wax*, I know he wouldn’t be remembered in the way that he is.”

She said her father loved genre roles because he just loved to work, even if he was being typecast:

“The first time my father played a real villain was in 1941-42 was in the Broadway run of *Angel Street*. And he sensed the audience’s palpable hatred of his character. That was just a big turn-on; he loved that. I definitely think he loved a character role. He was very uncomfortable playing someone close to himself, unless it was a sendup of himself. Were there moments he wished people saw him as more than a horror star? Yes. But I think he was very grateful for those roles.”

Victoria revealed her father took preparation for his roles very seriously:

“He was not by any means a method actor, but I think he loved doing research. He loved understanding the essence of a character, but sometimes even *he* didn’t know what the character was about. And admittedly, some of those movies and those roles are really weird. And those are the Poe roles, some of the most iconic, he didn’t know what they were about. There was one that was a combina-



Price as Nicholas Van Ryn in *Dragonwyrt* (1960)

tion of three Poe stories, with no real connection."

Despite this, Price adored the works of Edgar Allan Poe:

"Oh, he thought Poe was a genius. He was a great reader, loved poetry and was familiar with Poe as a poet. He said also in the del Valle interview, he had done *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe* in 1972. My mom, who had retired from doing costumes, did costumes for the project. And my dad thought it was the best Poe thing he ever did, because it was so true to Poe. A lot of kids tell me that their first introduction to my dad comes through these films, or *An Evening With Edgar Allan Poe*."

As for her father's "Renaissance man" qualities, Victoria explained it very simply as a love of activity. "He just loved to work, to learn and be active," she explained. "When I look at my resume, it's like I do a million things, and so does my brother. We were brought up to be omnivorous people to take in the world anyway that we can. My dad wanted to share his passions for everything."

During her time in St. Louis, Victoria also expressed her father's appreciation and deep love for his birthplace. The Price family had been in St. Louis for years—Vincent's father had built the National Candy Company in 1928, and the family's contributions are still very well seen within the area. The "black box" theater in the city's Mary Institute and Country Day School (MICDS) is named in honor of Vincent Price, one of its most famous alumni.

"My dad loved being from St. Louis," Victoria wrote in the Vincentennial program. She continued:

He couldn't have been prouder to be a hometown boy who made good. He always remembered his youth with joy—whether it was discovering arrowheads at the Cahokia Mounds, rooting for the perpetual underdog Browns, or buying his first piece of art at age 12 (a Rembrandt etching) from a local gallery. He was a proud alum of Country Day, and remained friends with many of his schoolmates for life—most notably, fellow art collector Buster May. He loved returning home to visit his

Flavoring, extract bottles and vintage advertisement from the Chicago-based Dr. Price's company. Vincent Price's grandfather, Vincent Clarence Price, invented Dr. Price's Icing Powder, the first cream of tartar baking powder, which secured the family's fortune.



Vincent Price's boyhood home, now faculty housing for a nearby university. Photo by Richard D. Squires



Vincent lovingly gazes up at wife, Edith Barrett in this publicity photo. From the Richard D. Squires Collection



A candid shot of Vincent Price with his parents, Vincent L. Price, Sr. and Marguerite Cobb Wilcox Price, circa 1939. His father and mother were extremely proud of their son's success. Born in St. Louis in 1911, Vincent was the youngest of the family. His older siblings were one brother, James Mortimer ("Mort"), and two sisters, Harriet ("Hat") and Lauralouse ("Lolly"). From the Robert Taylor/Sara Waugh Collection.



parents, to perform at the Muny, to chat with Country Day students—and mostly to eat the food! Certainly my father's love of food, which would lead him to author a cookbook *Savoir Magazine* would call "one of the 100 most important culinary events of the 20th century," was nurtured in St. Louis.

In addition to his St. Louis upbringing, her father also loved his Welsh roots and would say, "I'm Welsh, and the Celtic twilight sometimes descends at odd moments."

"My great-grandfather was a black-haired, fair-skinned Welshman," Victoria said. "And my dad was very much an Anglophile. He loved being married to two British women and loved working in England. I do think he had a melancholy side that came out from time to time because he held himself to very high standards, and sometimes the weight of his own expectations bore down on him."

Despite his increased age and declining health in the eighties and nineties, Price's career did not disappear, allowing for a reintroduction to a whole new group of younger fans.

Victoria said she was glad another generation met her father through works such as *Thriller* and *The Great Mouse Detective*, which Victoria confirmed was one of her father's



The St. Louis Arch and the Mississippi River from the Richard D. Squires Collection



all-time favorite films. His love of the role of Ratigan was partly because Disney animators incorporated his Shakespearean gestures into the character and because two songs had been written specifically for him to sing.

"My dad's voice was so iconic," she said. "He loved to do voiceover work, especially when you could do anything with it. And you absolutely wanted to have something like his voice, and someone like my dad for those kind of projects."

Many younger Price fans point to his performance as the Inventor in Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) as one of his greatest. An outdoor screening of the film, which marked Price's last screen appearance, was the closing event of the Vincentennial on Saturday, May 28, at the famed Mundy theater in Forest Park.

"Tim Burton is the closest thing we have to a Gothic horror icon today, and he is a director," Victoria said. "My dad loved working with him."

Burton's admiration of Vincent Price led to a 1982 short, *Vincent*, the story of seven-year-old Vincent Malloy, who wants to be just like Vincent Price. While working at Disney, Burton managed to get Price himself to narrate it—Burton's ultimate tribute to his hero.

Price loved what he saw, saying it was "the most gratifying thing that ever happened. It was immortality—better than a star on Hollywood Boulevard."

After *Vincent*, Burton and Price became friends, and Burton created a role in *Edward Scissorhands* especially for his friend. Victoria confirmed rumors that the part of the Inventor, who creates the titular character, was intended to be a larger role as a grander tribute to the actor. The

size of the role was revised, however, due to Price's was in poor health during filming.

Regardless, Victoria thinks it was a fitting film for that time in his life. He passed away on October 25, 1993 at the age of 82.

"It was an iconic swan song," Victoria said. "Had he not done it, he might have done a few more little roles, but this was the right one to be his last role."

She said she was grateful to the festival for honoring her father and celebrating his centennial to keep the memories and the connections alive. She reflected on Vincent Price's legacy:

"The longer he's been gone, the more distance I have from the reality of him as person, the more struck I am by the qualities by which he lived his life. He was unendingly generous. He was absolutely full of curiosity and passion. He was interested and interesting. He loved people, he loved art, he loved new experiences, he loved travel. He gave as much as he got from any experience. The legacy is, for me, if people could live with an eighth of the curiosity, kindness, generosity and passion with which my dad lived his life, it'd be an extraordinary way to live."

by MATT JAMIESON



COMING SOON!

From Hemlock Books..

MERCHANT OF MENACE

The Life and Films of Vincent Price

From *House of Wax* and *House of Usher* to the *House of the Long Shadows*, Denis Meikle's book is the definitive study of the fright-film career of Vincent Price, movieland's velvet-voiced 'Merchant of Menace'



X-CERT:

The British Independent Horror Film, 1955-1969

From *Cat Girl* and *Snake Woman* to *Incense for the Damned* and *Trog*, John Hamilton's book lifts the lid on the men who put the 'X' into the British X-certificate in the 1950s and '60s



NEW IN AUGUST...

British Cult Cinema: HAMMER Fantasy & Sci-Fi

Bruce Hallenbeck's follow-up to *The Hammer Vampire* takes the reader behind the scenes of more cult classics from Hammer Films



www.hemlockbooks.co.uk

**For the best in Film Horror,
Mystery and the Macabre..**



Hemlock Books

PO Box 208
Hailsham, East Sussex
United Kingdom BN27 9BT
Tel: 0845 116 1275



For more details on these or other Hemlock Books titles, please contact: info@hemlockbooks.com

Universal Pictures publicity photo, circa 1949. Vincent Price shows how to decorate a home. "Americans suffer an inferiority complex," he said. A full-time movie star and part-time art collector and dealer, Price urged home-owners to shop for real art—either genuine pictures, prints, art objects, etc., or copies of good pictures and pieces.

Circa 1962, Vincent Price looks over a Picasso at a Los Angeles store of Sears, Roebuck & Co., where he was collecting, framing and labeling a collection of art to be sold by 10 Sears stores throughout the country.



A portrait taken of Vinnie in 1939 by the multi-talented Carl Van Vechten—presumably in NYC. Van Vechten, known as a tireless patron for the Harlem Renaissance, was a noted writer and photographer in the '20s-'30s and became the literary executor for his friend Gertrude Stein when she passed away in 1946. He photographed many of the greatest authors and actors/actresses of the 1930s. From the Robert Taylor/Sara Waagh Collection.



Price at an exhibit of Helmut Newton's photography in West Hollywood. Newton was a longtime friend of Vincent's wife Coral Browne, and had done wonderful photos of her. Both she and Vinnie felt they were the best photos ever done of her. This photo was taken in 1992, a year before Price's death, by his close friend Roddy McDowall. Vincent was not often seen in public at this time, his increasing health problems (Parkinson's Disease necessitating the use of the walker or a wheelchair) limiting his outings severely. However, Price's interest in art—and his devotion to his friends—overrode even his health limitations at times. From the Robert Taylor/Sara Waagh Collection.



In 1934, Vinnie, who was studying in England at the time, was briefly engaged to a St. Louis beauty named Dorothy. During their courting days she teasingly called him "Tarzan"—presumably because his swimming expertise, his imposing height and his wavy hair reminded her of Buster Crabbe and Johnny Weissmuller, the two Tarzans of that era. As a lark, Vinnie went to a photographer to have his own "Tarzan" photos shot for Dorothy. As he couldn't afford the cost of a full photo shoot at that time, the photographer made him a deal—he'd do the shoot, but he would keep commercial rights to ONE of the photos. Price agreed and was delighted to present his sweetheart with the remaining photos. He was less happy three weeks later when he saw the one the photographer had reserved—blown up considerably larger—in a deodorous advertisement in *Picadilly Circus!* From the Robert Taylor/Sara Waugh Collection.



THE House of PRICE

Down and down it will inevitably down! I gasped and struggled at each vibration. I strain to resist it, but very sweep. My eyes followed its outward or upward whirls with the eagerness of the most intemperate despair; they closed themselves spasmodically at the descent, although death would have been a relief. O, how unspeakable! Still I quivered in every nerve. I think I saw a slight sinking of the machinery would precipitate that keen glistening axe upon my bosom. It was hope that prompted the nerve to quiver—the frame to shrink. It was *HILL*—the hope that triumphs on the rack—that whispers to the death-condemned even in the dungeons of the Inquisition...

—Poe

For many people, Vincent Price's image as a master of horror; those allegations of 'camp theatrical performances' that are so levelled at him, are founded through his appearances in the Edgar Allan Poe adaptations that Roger Corman directed for AIP. Price's name became synonymous with Poe, and as mentioned elsewhere this issue, the draw was such that even *Witchfinder General*, which had no connection with Poe at all, was renamed.

a conversation with
ROGER CORMAN

IN FEBRUARY THIS year I had the opportunity to chat with legendary director and producer, Roger Corman about his Poe pictures. I've been an admirer of Corman's work since youth, so I had to fight the fanboy flutters as we chatted over the phone. At 85, his memory is undimmed and he clearly remains dedicated to his work. He swiftly put me at ease and insisted I drop the 'Mr Corman' and call him Roger.

My last Roger Corman encounter was at a slight distance, back in 2009, when I travelled over to the Edinburgh Film Festival just to hear Roger talk about his life and work. Also at the festival was his protégé, Joe Dante. Roger and Joe were actively talking about a potential new project based around their old techniques. A three part serial called *Splatter* that would be produced weekly, and which met with very positive reaction on release.

"We did make the short, with my wife and me co-producing and Joe directing for Netflix. And the whole idea of it was that it would play on three successive nights separated by one week each, starting on Halloween. And the audience would vote as to who they wanted killed in the next episode and, we then had one week to write, shoot and edit the episode in which that person was killed. It did very well. It was extremely successful"

One can't help but wonder (nay, hope!) if this is the start of his return to directing the genre.

"We don't directly have anything to do with Netflix on another one but we like the idea. What we did was to shoot all possible endings so if they did choose character A to die, we had already shot that and would cut that in. If they picked character B to die, we'd already shot that and cut that in, so we've been able to sell it around the



Photo by Jason Viorick



...they swarmed upon me in
ever accumulating heaps.

Two illustrations by Henry Clarke (1889-1971) for Edgar Allan Poe's
Stories of Mystery and Imagination



...but then
without those
doors there did
stand the lofty
and enshrouded
figure of the
lady Madeline
of Usher.

world on the same basis that whoever say the audience in Australia wants to die, if its character C, we've got it. And so it will be completely original everywhere it shows. Joe said "This is the way we all started, this will be fun" and that's the reason I did it."

Roger's ability to turn round a film at an ultra-low budget in a matter of days is well known. *A Bucket of Blood* was shot in five days, and *Little Shop of Horrors* in a mere two days and a night. The first of the Poe pictures – *House of Usher* was done on a comparatively luxurious 15 day shoot. Some 50 years later, the process hasn't changed that much, at least creatively.

"It was similar. The main thing is that when I was shooting the Edgar Allan Poe films with Vincent we shot on sound stages with sets constructed for the picture; in this one we found an old house in the Hollywood Hills, and we shot within that house; so it was a different situation. We're more limited in the scope of our shooting simply because of the size of the rooms, but it was a similar concept to what we did with Vincent."

Prior to *House of Usher*, Roger was as at home making a western as a monster movie, as he explains: "I had been making a series of pictures, which American International Pictures (AIP) and Allied Artists, two independent companies, distributed, and the way I did it I would shoot black and white pictures, each in ten days, and they would sell them as a double feature – two horror films or science fiction films, two action/adventure films and so forth. And I was talking with AIP and they wanted me to

do two horror films, in ten days each, in black and white for around \$70-80,000 a picture. And I said I thought this concept of double bill was getting tired, and the audience wasn't responding as well, and that what I would prefer to do—if they would back me—was to do one 15-day horror film in colour for about \$250,000, and they asked me what I wanted to do, and I said *The Fall Of The House Of Usher*, which had been a favourite story—I'd read it as a schoolboy. And they agreed to do that, and surprisingly enough my first choice for Roderick Usher was the same as Jim Nicholson's, who was head of production for AIP. We both picked Vincent Price.

"Vincent embodied some of the characteristics of Usher in the short story, in which he was an intelligent, educated, rather courtly gentleman, of great sensitivity, and I felt Vincent had all of those characteristics."

Had Roger and Vincent's paths crossed before he was cast? And what was he like to work with?

"No. I had never met him before. I had lunch with him before we shot the picture, we discussed the picture and the character and how we saw the character and the general style of the picture, but that was the first time I

actor to do the job and Vincent worked that way very well. He was a classically trained actor and he understood exactly the way in which we were working and responded very well."

Evidently the professional relationship worked. Roger would direct Vincent on several more pictures after *House of Usher* (1960)—*The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961), *Tales of Terror* (1962), *Tower of London* (1962), *The Haunted*



Vincent Price, on the set of *House of Usher* (1960)

Palace (1963), *The Raven* (1963), *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964) and *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964).

"The distributors asked for it. *Usher* was a big success, as a matter of fact the biggest success American International had ever had at that time, and they asked me to do another one. I was going to choose *Masque of the Red Death* but Igmar Bergman's *Seventh Seal* had come out and there were some similarities between *Masque of the Red Death* and *Seventh Seal* and I felt that people would think I was copying the *Seventh Seal*, although *Masque of the Red Death* was written in the mid-1800s, and so I chose *The Pit and the Pendulum* instead."

With the regularity of Roger's Poe adaptations, one assumes he has a particular attraction to Poe, or even to Lovecraft, who also seems to be an influence in a lot of the stories?

"Yes. I have an attraction to both. Personally, I'm more attracted to Poe. I think they were both good writers. I think Poe was a more subtle writer than Lovecraft, and was specifically working with the unconscious mind at a time when the concept of the unconscious mind was pretty much unknown."

Whilst film students are used to reading into cinematic works as part of their academic pursuits, it might surprise you to learn that Roger actively embraced theory in his filmmaking. He's on record as talking about the Freudian symbolism present in his films. I asked Roger if this was something that he was into throughout his whole filmmaking career, or was this something that came



Mark Damon, Vincent Price, and Wynne Evans in *House of Usher* (1960)

had met Vincent.

"I worked with Vincent, in general, the way I worked with most actors; I don't like to give a lot of direction on the set. I discussed the role in advance with the actor and just at the beginning of the day and the beginning of each scene had a brief discussion as to the interpretation; then I leave as much as possible to the actor because I trust the

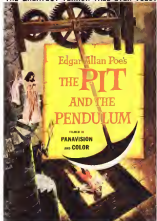


LEFT: Candid publicity photo of AIP president James H. Nicholson, Vincent Price, and Barbara Steele—fresh out of *Mano Bava's Black Sunday* (1960)—on the back lot of American International's *Pit & the Pendulum*.

BOTTOM: Roger Corman (center), and crew, line up a shot of John Kerr, lying on the stone slab, about to be sliced in two by the pendulum blade. Cinematographer, Floyd Crosby, stands next to the camera.

BOTTOM LEFT: Nicholas Medina (Vincent Price) promises his adulterous wife (Barbara Steele) the agonies of hell. *Pit & the Pendulum*, AIP (1961).

THE GREATEST TERROR TALE EVER TOLD!



VINCENT PRICE • KIM KALFAR • BARBARA STEELE • DIANA ARONSON
RICHARD WATKINSON • ROGER CORMAN • LES DARTER • FRANKY ROSENBERG • AIP



later on as the critics started to analyse the films?

"As a matter of fact it was probably one of the reasons the critics DID analyse the films. I was interested in psychoanalysis and Freudian interpretation of dreams, and his whole concept of the subconscious, the unconscious, which was similar to Poe's. I felt that Freud was working in a scientific way, or at least partially scientific way, in the same as the way Poe was working in an artful way. And so I tried to use some of Freud's concepts of symbolism and dream theory in the Poe pictures. This is why I had in almost every one of them at least one dream or fantasy sequence."

Almost as obligatory as the dream sequence in the Poe pictures was the fire-fuelled climax...

"No, that just happened and finally I stopped it, because I said I'd burned down the set in every picture! [laughs]. I said we've got to find a different way to end these films."

Vincent himself once commented in an interview "I was never frightened by the plots. The scariest thing was all those fires blazing! Symbolical cleansing by fire is a horror-tale tradition. I have been singed many times.... But then Roger's a fire fiend. He's a firebug."

By the time of the last in the series, *The Tomb of Ligia*, the fire was back—although an infamous incident on set resulted in the controlled special effect fire spreading and burning down the set for real.

"Yes. Right. We went back to it [fire] because I'd stepped away from it with *Masque of the Red Death* and *The Raven*, and I felt now it was okay to go back and burn down the set." [laughs]

While we're talking about the Poe cycle I take a moment to raise an observation about the prevalence of the



gothic tradition with the Hammer gothic cycle running parallel to the Corman Poe's.

With the last couple of Poe pictures Roger came to the UK to shoot. I suggest to Roger that there's an obvious comparison perhaps with the Hammer films that were being produced natively in Britain at the time and which must have been screening in competition with the AIP/Corman Poe films. Was the cycle deliberately tapping into the Hammer gothic trend, and was that why AIP brought the whole production to the UK?

"I was aware that Hammer Films was making films. I only saw one of them as a matter of fact, and I thought it was a well-made film. But it had nothing to do with Hammer Films, it was the fact the Poe pictures had been quite successful in England, and at that time England had something called the Eady plan, which was a subsidy from the UK government, and American International suggested that I shoot in England. Their English distributor Anglo-Amalgamated had done well with the Poe films and they had asked AIP; AIP asked me and I said 'Sure, I'd like to go to London' and shoot film, and then I came back to do a second film."

Okay. So any kind of stylistic similarities that people can see within your Poe pictures and the Hammer gothics isn't intentional, or it's not knowing, it's a kind of co-incidental thing?

Roger's response is a little surprising on many levels. When I've taught classes on gothic horror, I've sat down and compared sequences from Corman's Poe films (usually *House of Usher*) and Hammer's gothics (usually *Dracula*). Those unfamiliar with the films often can't tell the differ-



A fire-fuelled climax from *House of Usher* (1960)

One of Corman's Freudian dream sequences from *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964)



LEFT: Vincent Price gets his hair and make-up done for the role of Ernest Valdemar, as Basil Rathbone looks on. *Tales of Terror* (1962)

ABOVE: Publicity shot of Price in full make-up as Ernest Valdemar.

TOP LEFT: Another publicity shot of Price as Fortunato Luchres, holding the head of Peter Lorre. *Tales of Terror* (1962)

BELOW: An illustration by Harry Clarke (1889-1931) for Edgar Allan Poe's *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*, part of his *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*



...his whole frame at once-within the space of a single minute, or less, shrunk-crumbled-absolutely rotted away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before the whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome-of detestable putrescence.

-Poe

ence, such is the production design and stylings. Roger insists that the stylistic semblance wasn't intentional: "Any similarity is totally coincidental. I only saw one of their films, and I thought it was quite a bit different from mine."

It is quite interesting that Roger was making these old, these classic Victorian gothic pictures at the same time that the British were doing the same sort of thing. And the Italians as well—people like Mario Bava.

"I saw two of Mario Bava's films. I thought he was a brilliant director. I thought he was one of the best directors of horror and other types of films, genre films, working. I've great admiration for him."

Presumably Roger didn't see *Dr Goldfoot and the Bikini Machine* then! Speaking of Bava brings us back to discussion of Roger's relationship with Vincent.

"It was an exceptionally good working relationship. We got along well together, he was an excellent actor and a great gentleman, and actually was very funny to talk with; we brought humour into some of the later films, because I was trying to vary them. I thought they were starting to look too much alike, and on *The Raven* and one of the segments of *Tales of Terror*, which was a trilogy, we played for comedy horror."

The comedy horror sequences are some of my favourites in the Poe cycle. But those scenes are so much richer by casting Price against other screen greats—people like Karloff and Peter Lorre. What was it like to have that entire collective on set?

"It was stimulating. We had one slight problem on *The Raven*, but it wasn't a major one. Peter liked to do a lot of improvisations and Boris worked directly according to the script and he came in I think on the second or third day of shooting and talked to me before shooting and said 'Roger, I learn these lines exactly. I'm prepared to give the performance. But Peter is not giving me the lines that are in the script. He's making them up similar to the lines and I don't know the cues.' So I had to have a little discussion with Vincent and Peter and Boris. I loved the way Peter was improvising, [laughs] but I said 'Peter, try to stay a little bit closer to the script. And Boris, if you can understand that Peter will be varying it a little bit...' Vincent was able to work both ways so it actually worked out well.

"I liked all of their work, I thought they were all excellent actors, and of course there was the factor of name

value. We'd been working with Vincent on each one and the idea of bringing Vincent and Boris and Peter together seemed, from a box office standpoint, a good idea."

Roger's lengthy experience as a producer ensured he had an acute awareness of the needs of marketing a film; a function that a lot of directors forget about. Did Roger find himself thinking more as a producer, or more as a director when making these films?

"I try to combine them. I would always be working as a producer-director, but in pre-production I would probably be emphasising the work of the producer's side of it. But during the direction, during the actual shooting, I would be functioning as a straight director, with just a little bit of attention to the production side."

The Poe cycle was and remains a very influential





Roger Corman and visitors on the set of *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964)



cycle. It is still widely talked about by film fans, and by the generation of filmmakers who watched them in their youth, or learnt their craft on them. The cycle ended very abruptly in 1964. What was the reason?

"I just felt tired. I felt I had done as many of these as I wanted. I was in danger of repeating myself too much even though I tried to vary them. They were all successful, AIP asked me to do another one, I said 'No, I really want to do something else. I want to step away from the studio and shoot outside, contemporary films in natural locations', which I did with *The Trip* and with *The Wild Angels*, and several other films. They continued with I think one or two more Poe films, with another director—I don't remember who it was."

Roger took a backseat from directing following his adaptation of *Frankenstein Unbound* in 1970, but to this day he continues his prolific work as a film producer. Was he never tempted to ask Vincent to work for him again?

"No. The films I was making after that were really contemporary and youth-oriented films, and they didn't fit Vincent's persona. We would have lunch together oc-

casionally and just talk, and it was pleasant. And sometimes if I would have a dinner party or something at my house I would invite Vincent, and Vincent would do the same with me."

Whilst their collaboration together only lasted some four years, 50 years ago, it seems that Roger and Vincent's legacies are intertwined. Roger Corman's pictures are fine cinematic explorations of the gothic, with glorious aesthetics and some of the most engaging Vincent Price

performances committed to the screen. They truly made Vincent not just a star, but a genre icon. Although perhaps less iconic, Roger has too ensured his lasting legacy and influence in the genre. During this year's Vincentennial celebrations, Roger headed out to St. Louis to talk in front of sellout crowds to discuss his work with Vincent. Without Roger's contribution, I very much doubt we'd be viewing Vincent in quite the same way today.

by ROBERT J.E. SIMPSON

My personal thanks to Roger for taking the time out to talk to me and sharing his memories with the readers of *Diabolique*. You can visit Roger's official website at www.newhorizonspictures.com





a conversation with IAN OGILVY

I RECENTLY SPOKE WITH regular Reeves collaborator, and *Witchfinder* co-star Ian Ogilvy about the making of the film and his memories of working with Vincent. English-born, Ian Ogilvy is perhaps best remembered as the star of *The Return of the Saint* on tv in the 1970s, donning the role vacated by Roger Moore. Now living in the US, Ian still acts, and is also a successful playwright and novelist.

"It was funny because for a long time, not so much now, but for a long time, it was a favourite topic of film students. I used to get a lot of letters from students of film about that over the years. Of course, there was a rather good book written by a man called John Murray¹, so I refer them to that now—it answers all the questions really."

Ian's involvement with *Witchfinder* was probably set before the film had even entered the scripting stage. Ian had a lasting friendship with director Michael Reeves, which had frequently spilled over into a professional capacity.

"We met when we were 15, and started making movies together: he as the director, me as his leading man. Michael always felt comfortable with people he knew—he liked to have a repertory of people that he used to use all the time, and I was the main one, I was in all three of his movies.

¹ *The Remarkable Michael Reeves: His Short And Tragic Life*, by John B. Murray (revised edition by Midnight Marquee Press, 2004)



CONQUERING THE WORM

By 1967 Vincent Price's screen career had become indelibly linked with Edgar Allan Poe, thanks to Roger Corman's sumptuous adaptations of classic Poe stories for AIP. Price was arguably caught in a rut. But budding British director Michael Reeves was to offer a glimpse of something more substantial in Price's playing ability when he reluctantly cast him as the titular lead in *Witchfinder General*. A harsh, brutal portrayal of the legendary Matthew Hopkins, filled with subtle nuances and a conviction second to none.





"Vincent was forced on him by the producers, because they needed a big name to sell in America"

I think probably when he had the idea of the movie he had me in mind because he always felt comfortable with me really. I was always going to be in it, as far as I know.

"Because we were great friends we had lots of discussions pre-production, but I wasn't one of his scriptwriters. A good friend of his called Tom Baker was his main script collaborator; I wasn't too involved in any production details."

That Price was not the director's first choice for the role has been established many times in the past. With Michael and Ian being friends, I wondered at what stage Ian became aware of Price's involvement?

"[laughs] I don't quite remember, but I do remember Michael being upset at it because, you probably know the story, he originally wanted Donald Pleasance to play the part. And Donald Pleasance would have given a completely different take on it and the whole movie of course. He wanted a rather ridiculous little man to be playing this enormously scary person. Vincent was forced on him by the producers, because they needed a big name to sell in America. So he was rather upset by that, but he had no choice in the matter. I think it was an angry phone call, 'You're not going to fucking believe this' is the kind of way it would have started..."

"If you analyse that movie I don't actually spend very much time with [Price]—I'm busy chasing round the countryside, and he's doing his own scenes—in fact we only had a couple of scenes together. I had my storyline and Vincent had his storyline and we only come together at the end. I didn't spend very much time working with him at all, but working with him was fine, unless he was in a filthy mood. Unless he was sulking about something,

which he occasionally was inclined to do. Most of the time I think people got on quite well with him. He was quite an old trooper really by then—I think he was trying to make the best of it.

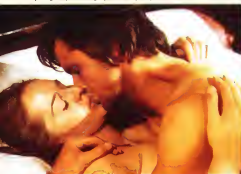
"He wasn't happy at all, he was stuck out there in the wilds of Norfolk. He was used to the comfort of the Hollywood studio system, and having trailers and things; he didn't get any of that when we were shooting *Witchfinder*. He was stuck in Norfolk in the rain and the cold and being told by a young director who he'd never heard of to 'stop rolling his eyes' and 'please would he be more real'. So he wasn't happy a lot of the time but my direct involvement with him wasn't as much as some of the other actors. Hilary Dwyer had the most to do with him of course, and Robert Russell."

Most of Ian and Vincent's onscreen collaboration came during the brutal final sequence.

"The problem with the final sequence is that we only had that castle and those dungeons for one night, and we had an enormous amount of complicated set-ups to do. We were interior, it was night time, and it was very tough. No retakes involved, because we didn't have time for that. We just had to move along at a hugely fast pace.



The brutal final sequence, filmed on location



"The ending of the movie was forced on Michael, in fact I think it turned out rather well. I don't know if you remember, but it's the sort of echoing screams round the empty narrow stone passageways of the castle. And of course that was purely accidental; I can't exactly remember the original ending but I think it went on from there, and if not it was more complex, but frankly we just ran out of time, and we got the essential parts of the story on film. There's a lot of stuff of tracking shots of me and Vincent and the villain being, walking through the corridors on the way to the dungeon, and there were sufficient beginnings and ends of those scenes, where the corridors were empty, for Michael to be able to grab them and put them in and use them for the background for all this demented screaming from Hilary Dwyer. But the fact is the ending is more accidental than planned. It was a long night, but it was an arduous one simply because we had so much work to do and so little time to do it in."

The year before, Ian had worked with Reeves on another low-budget horror thriller called *The Sorcerers*, alongside the legendary Boris Karloff. Like with *Witchfinder* there were pressures of time and budget...

"*The Sorcerers* was a little less structured in that we would not actually have permission from the police or anyone for an awful lot of our shooting, for instance it's a well known story that at the end of *The Sorcerers* when we blew the car up, we didn't ask anybody's permission anywhere: we found an empty old building site and we blew the car up there, but unfortunately the special effects people had forgotten to empty the petrol tank, so when we blew it up the explosion was about six times bigger than we anticipated, and apparently even blew out the occasional window in the neighbourhood. We all got visited by the police and our names were taken [laughing]. By the time we got to *Witchfinder* it was actually a really kind of professional shoot. Everything else of [Michael's] has always been slightly caught on the fly."



While Michael had been making films for years, *Witchfinder* was only his third feature. His debut feature *The She Beast* notoriously featured Barbara Steele in a support role, but owing to pressures of time and money, all of her scenes were shot in one 18 hour day, something Steele didn't easily forget.

"We never had enough money for these things. *Witchfinder* was the first time he actually had enough money. But I do remember he needed Rupert Davies, who played the priest, for one more day, and the producer was saying he couldn't have him for one more day, so in those days long before cell phones, Michael went to one of those red phone boxes somewhere in the wilds of Norfolk, standing out on a moor somewhere, and he called the producer and he was having this argument with him. 'I need Rupert for one more day.' 'Well you can't.' And he said to him, 'Tony, what do you think I'm doing at the moment?' 'Well, you're calling me.' He said 'I'm standing in a red phone box on a moor in Yorkshire and I'm not going to leave this phonebox until you say I can have Rupert for the day. Time is wasting. We've got stuff to make, but I'm not going to move out of here, I'm not going to shoot a single foot of film unless you tell me I can have Rupert for another day.' He got Rupert for another day."

Michael Reeves' reputation as a director has grown in the decades since his untimely death, aged only 25, from a barbiturate overdose in 1969. Whether Reeves would have grown into a truly great director is left to speculation.

"The thing about Michael was that he didn't really direct actors, because he didn't really understand acting—he was quite open about that. His great hero was the film director Don Siegel. He'd spent time with Siegel and he'd watched Siegel work and Don Siegel also didn't direct actors. Don Siegel used to cast his movies right. That's what he'd used to say 'If I cast the movie right, I never have to speak to the actors at all' which was his favourite thing. Mike had a huge respect for actors but didn't understand



the process that we all go through, so he preferred to leave us alone and let us get on with it.

"Mike's direction would be 'could you do that faster?' That was all he ever really said, you didn't get long conversations about motivation or anything like that from Michael. He trusted you to do it yourself; one of the reasons he used to employ me was he knew the way I worked and I didn't ask him for direction. Vincent wasn't like that at all, Vincent of course did get direction from Michael but of course it was all in the negative. It was not 'Could you please...?' It was always 'Could you please NOT do that?' So it became for Vincent quite wearing really and rather irritating to have this young, untried, untested, unknown film director telling him not to do things that had worked for Vincent very well all his career."

Hearing this it is easy to reach the conclusion that this was Michael reacting to the fact that he didn't want Vincent on the film in the first place.

"No, it wasn't that. He was a fatalist, Michael. Once he got Vincent he made the best of it. But once he'd got him he was determined not to let him do his usual big-scale, campy, Edgar Allan Poe type acting—which worked terribly well in those glossy AIP Edgar Allan Poe movies like *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Fall of the House of Usher* and all those big movies that Vincent was doing under his contract at the time. But for this movie, which Michael considered to be intensely realistic, he wanted some realism, and in fact I think got it from Vincent. Vincent was always of the mind that this was one of the best performances he'd ever given. But it was a reluctant business I tell you!"

Despite the reluctance of Vincent, Ian has no bad words to say about his personal experiences with the actor, recalling spending evenings with him and the rest of the cast.

"You know my first meeting with Vincent? You've probably read about that but it's a story I like to tell. Well,

"Oh my god she's so pretty and she rides that fucking horses so well, I hate her!"

he'd been on the movie a week before I'd even arrived, and I arrived and got my costume on and somebody had given me my horse and suggested that I try riding it. So I'm riding this enormous horse down this lane, and I'm trotting slowly along and there looks to be what seems to be a pile of black clothes in a ditch ahead, and as I pass the pile of black clothes Vincent comes out and he says, [Ian adopts a rather campy nasal voice, apologising for not being able to do Vincent properly] 'Oh my god she's so pretty and she rides that fucking horses so well, I hate her!' This was Vincent Price.

"He was like that, he was very funny. We used to sit in the evenings, in the hotel in Bury-St-Edmunds, and he'd be terribly entertaining. He loved sitting, telling funny stories and jangling his turquoise jewellery—he wore a lot of turquoise jewellery. He loved bracelets and things."

Ian only made the one film with Vincent, although had Michael not died it seems probable that Ian would have once again been cast for *The Oblong Box* which Michael had begun preparations for, and for which Vincent had been cast.

"I thought he was superb. As I say, the fact that he was directable at all, considering the niche he'd made for himself in Hollywood—he'd made this role for himself and it worked extremely well. For him to be able to reluctantly come out of it, and actually do something like that, I thought, he was fabulous. When you hired Vincent you hired Vincent, whether you liked it or not. But what Michael managed to do, fighting him every bit of the way, was to stop him being Vincent occasionally and get him to be Matthew Hopkins, which I thought was a remarkable achievement—considering the fact that Michael didn't

know how to direct actors! He always said he didn't. He said 'I don't know what to say to actors'. I thought Vincent was terrific. I always liked him as an actor, but he was very mannered. If you put Vincent on the screen now doing that kind of eye-rolling stuff, I don't think it would be really acceptable now. Probably.

"He always had his tongue firmly in his cheek of course when he did those horror movies. I thought one of the best things he did was the *Dr. Phibes* movies. But again, he was allowed to go back to the theatrical performances, but it worked for those scripts. For *Witchfinder* it would not have worked for."

Out of all of Ian's vast body of work, who would have predicted that some 44 years on, people would still



Ogilvy is perhaps best known as the successor to Roger Moore in 1970s tv series *The Return of the Saint*. Born in Surrey, England in 1943 he's been a successful screen actor since the mid 1960s, with credits including *The Avengers*, *The Sorcerers*, *Upstairs Downstairs*, *From Beyond the Grave*, *And Now The Screaming Storms*, 5 appearances on *Murder She Wrote*, *Diagnosis Murder*, *Death Becomes Her*, *Babylon 5* and *Morphe*. He is the author of the extremely successful Measle books, published by Oxford University Press. His website is www.ianogilvy.com

Matthew Hopkins (Vincent Price) buys some snacks at a local shop, during the gruelling production



be talking about *Witchfinder General*. There must be a satisfaction for anyone whose work lasts long beyond its anticipated lifespan, and garners such acclaim.

"It's weird, isn't it. The world is divided into two parts—people who know about *Witchfinder General* and people who don't. The vast majority of them are the people who don't of course, you must remember that! Most people have never heard of it. Its film buffs who know about it.

"I did a couple of movies with Peter Cushing, I did one with Vincent Price and one with Boris Karloff, none of them can be said to be horror movies in the real sense of the word. I was just cheap, that's why I did low-budget horror movies!"

by ROBERT J.E. SIMPSON



MICHAEL REEVES

THE FORGOTTEN HORROR PRODIGY



IN THE 32 years since he died, Reeves has been largely forgotten within global horror circles, eclipsed by directors like Terence Fisher, Freddie Francis and, perhaps, John Gilling, who churned out dozens of low-budget chillers in long and sometimes turbulent careers.

Yet Reeves' films, particularly the grim and unrelenting *Witchfinder General* (known in the States as *The Conqueror Worm*), have kept his name alive among British fans, who recognise the touch of genius in the film which unquestionably contains Vincent

Price's career-best performance.

In a century of filmmaking Britain has produced only a handful of horror pictures which can be rightly described as classics. Among them are *Dead of Night*, *Night of the Demon*, *Night of the Eagle*, *The Innocents*, Hammer's *The Curse of Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *The Brides of Dracula*, and Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man*. *Witchfinder General* is up there with the best of them – a terrifying, brutal tale, based on truth and boasting all the best that sheer horror and Grand Guignol can offer.

Born in 1944, Reeves, a cineaste and film scholar, broke into movies by flying to Los Angeles and brazenly turning up on the doorstep of his idol, the American director Don Siegel, to ask for a job. Siegel, himself a film fan as well as a filmmaker, took him on as a dialogue director.

Returning to England, Reeves graduated a few rungs up the ladder, working as a gofer on movies like *The Long Ships* and *Genghis Khan* before moving into television commercials.

Another break came via producer Paul Maslansky, who allowed Reeves to work on a few scripts and engaged him as assistant director on *Castle of the Living Dead*,

When Michael Reeves died, aged just 24, in 1969 from an accidental overdose of barbiturates, one of Britain's most brilliant filmmaking talents died with him.

In a career lasting just five years, Reeves had gained a reputation for highly stylised and unique filmmaking on the basis of just four-and-a-half movies. They included *Castle of the Living Dead*, *Revenge of the Blood Beast*, *The Sorcerers*, the seminal shocker *Witchfinder General* and *The Oblong Box*, on which Reeves had just begun working when he died in his sleep.



From day one Reeves and Price were at loggerheads, principally because Reeves openly revealed he was unhappy with the casting of Price.

a cheapie European horror being shot in Italy starring Christopher Lee.

When director Warren Kiefer became sick, Reeves was encouraged to bump up his contribution and with a second unit shot some stylish footage, including a circus sequence featuring Donald Sutherland as a witch.

Reeves' work resulted in Maslansky offering him a script, *Vardella*, which was to be variously re-titled *Revenge of the Blood Beast*, *Satan's Sister* and *The She-Beast*. Italian favourite Barbara Steele starred as an indestructible witch.

Though it was shot on a minuscule budget, and the script (re-written by Reeves under a *nom-de-plume*) was somewhat tedious, *Revenge of the Blood Beast* illustrated the promise of what Reeves could do with a banal horror movie.

Back in England after his Italian sojourn, Reeves battled to set up new projects and eventually, with friend

and partner Tom Baker, penned a script from John Burke's novel *The Sorcerers*.

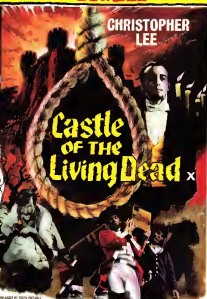
The eventual movie, again shot on a tiny budget, would star horror legend Boris Karloff and Catherine Lacey as an elderly married couple who, through a unique method of hypnosis, can live vicariously through young people and feel their emotions.

An intense combination of horror movie and *Peeping Tom*-style voyeurism, it provided yet more building blocks for the reputation Reeves was beginning to forge – that of an original and highly inventive young filmmaker.

Reeves' brief but brilliant career reached its peak with *Witchfinder General* in 1968, a project he had adapted, with Tom Baker, from the dry historical novel by Ronald Bassett.

The project was picked up by American International Pictures, which hired Reeves to direct his own script but disagreed with him over his choice of star. Reeves wanted Donald Pleasence; he got Vincent Price.

IF YOU'VE NEVER KNOWN **FEAR**-THIS IS YOUR **DOUBLE** CHANCE!!



From day one Reeves and Price were at loggerheads, principally because Reeves openly revealed he was unhappy with the casting of Price. He felt the 56-year-old star was too identified with the OTT films of Roger Corman, and that his acting was hammy and affected.

Over the five-week shoot the Young Turk and the old star frequently locked horns. Reeves told Price not to shake his head, to play down his character, the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins, and present him as a menacing psychotic.

Price, shaken at his director's obvious dislike of him, concentrated on the job, and in doing so gave the performance of his career. Hopkins emerges as cold, reptilian, dead-eyed, mercenary and murderous.

In a stark film he is the starkest thing in it—a sinister figure in black scything through the English countryside plucking innocents at random and hanging or burning them as witches until he is brought down by the power of good, represented by a young soldier.

Witchfinder General was a big success for AIP, and for Reeves, who succeeded, almost single-handedly, in changing the face of the British horror film.

Despite their differences, Reeves and Price were

scheduled to work together again on two other pictures: *The Oblong Box* and *Scream and Scream Again*.

Both men got as far as costume fittings and preparation for the first when Reeves was found dead. (Both films would eventually be made by Gordon Hessler).

An inquest recorded an open verdict, but Reeves had apparently overdosed on barbiturates. Producer Tony Tenser claimed his death was accidental, that Reeves went to bed with a headache, took some tablets, still had the headache and took some more.

Independently wealthy and with "a nice girlfriend", Reeves, said Tenser, would never have killed himself.

Price had a different opinion. He claimed Reeves was unstable and had attempted suicide frequently before; having broken up with his girlfriend, he finally succeeded.

And so as Reeves died, a myth was born. Forty years later, he remains a lost talent—a young man on the verge of massive success who, like James Dean, died before he could truly realise his tremendous gifts.

by TONY EARNSHAW



TS: *Vincent Price was about 25 years older than you...*

ES: *Yes, but nobody but Vincent could have played that role and in any case, Vincent Price was a most attractive man! There was no problem for Rowena to fall in love with him. I thought he was charming and there was a sexual attraction, no problem at all.*

Elizabeth Shepherd on *Tomb of Ligeia*


From an interview by Tom Stockman, 2011
WeAreMovieGeeks.com



EDGAR ALLAN POE'S

THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

a conversation with
JANE ASHER

A theatrical scene from 'The Masque of the Red Death'. On the left, a man in a black robe and a crown-like headpiece looks towards the right. In the foreground, a woman in a red dress and a crown-like headpiece is seen from the side. On the right, a large, red, hooded figure stands with its back to the camera, looking towards the man in black. The background is dark with some architectural details.

The "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood...

—Poe



British stage, film and television actress Jane Asher, whose film roles include Francesca in Roger Corman's *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964), alongside Vincent Price as Prince Prospero; and Susan in Jerzy Skolimowski's darkly disturbing *Deep End* (1970), sat down recently with our own Rod Webber for an exclusive conversation.

WE'RE HERE to talk about *The Masque of the Red Death*, so a good place to start would be simply with your recollections of the production.

I think I was 16 or 17 at the time. One of the strongest memories I had, sadly, is that it was the year when Kennedy was shot, and, of course, being very much an American production with an American star and an American director—the very famous, fabulous Roger Corman—everyone was extremely upset. I mean, not to say that we weren't devastated in the UK as well, but naturally, the American part of our production were even more affected by it than we were. And I can remember the shocked silence on the set as we all stood and took it in. So that, I have to say, is one of my strongest memories, not surprisingly. Otherwise, I, of course, remember Vincent Price, as I'm sure anyone else who spoke to him will tell you—the most charming, civilized, well-educated, lovely guy, I mean, one of the nicest people I've ever worked with. And the wonderful contrast of this charming man doing all those horrific films, albeit with his wonderful sense of humor, is, I think, what makes him so special.

How did you get cast in the part?

I can't specifically remember what Roger had seen me in. I know he'd seen me in a few things, so I really can't answer that question. It's always hard to know why you're picked out and asked to be in certain things, and I don't remember whether I had to audition for it; I don't think so. I think I went to one meeting with him and we had a chat and he said, "Yeah, this is definitely the way I want to play it," so I don't remember it being particularly difficult. I leapt at it, of course. I knew the story of Edgar Allan Poe, in any case, and it was clearly a very clever





adaptation, kind of bringing two or three of the stories into one, and of course the reputation of both Roger Corman and Vincent Price went for them, so I jumped at it, and as with many horrific stories—and this has been so of many productions in my career—it was so much fun and very funny much of the time on the set. It's almost as if the most unpleasant thing you're working in, in story terms, and the more blood and gore and horror, the funnier things have to be. It's almost like you work against it, and of course it isn't like it appears on screen, you know—a makeup artist rushes in with a bucket of blood and chucks it all over the place, and it isn't in any way as horrific as if someone was literally bleeding all over the floor. So the whole process becomes very practical, and in that way, often very funny.

How would you describe Corman's directing style?

Very efficient, very fast. He knows exactly what he wants, and you don't do a lot of takes ... because he knows so specifically what he wants. He puts it across very well, very clearly. Again, a charming guy, and I saw him not that long ago. He came out to London, and we met, and it was lovely to catch up with him again. Yes, I'd say that's my main memory of him.



"Since then, during my career, I've had to do several nude scenes, and you kind of get used to it, but at that age it was all very agonizing"

It's very efficient and very speedy, and I know he's kind of famous for getting things in on- or under-budget. And I remember also that we had this rather wonderful castle set built in a studio, and he was shooting lots of film on various parts of the set with nobody in it, and he said he was going to be able to use that in future productions. I mean, in every way he is incredibly sort of organized and practical, and just very easy to work with because he put across so well just what he wanted.

He was obviously very prepared. Were there anything specific he did to help you prepare for your character?

No, I don't think so. It's one of those wonderful you learn your lines the night before you turn up on the set, he tells you how he wants it, and you get on with it. And I can remember the agony of doing the scene in the bath, 'cause at that age, whatever I was, I was so horribly shy. I mean, since then, during my career, I've had to do several nude scenes, and you kind of get used to it, but at that age it was all very agonizing, and I think I actually had little sticky things over my nipples, you know, as I sat in the bath, 'cause I was so shy, and they kept floating up in the water, and I had to push them back on again. I can remember that being really agonizing and the cameraman sort of sighing and looking a bit fed up with all this ridiculous modesty. And, of course, when you look back at yourself at that age, you know, what were you so scared about? ... I can remember that very well. My condolences to the young man who played my lover, an actor called David Weston, whom I did two or three other things with, including playing to his Romeo on stage. He was absolutely sweet and charming, and I think we found it great



fun to work together.

I imagine it was difficult in the bath. I think it would be illegal these days, in fact.

[Laughs] Also, considering the age difference between myself and Vincent, it would probably be a bit dodgy by today's standards.

In the bath scene, Vincent asks when he sees your medallion, "Do you believe, or is that merely a decoration?" It might be asking too much to go there...

Oh, ask anything you like.

Do you have religious leanings and does or did they affect that?

No, absolutely not. No, rather the opposite. [Laughs] No, I definitely don't. We have a magazine over here called *The New Scientist*, which is an extremely wonderful, addictive magazine that puts science in laymen's terms without being patronizing or hopefully playing down to us too much, and I would call that my bible, rather than anything religious.

One interesting thing about a lot of Edgar Allan Poe and Vincent Price are the dark themes that work into it, and I always wondered about Vincent's own religious leanings. In the biography, by his daughter, Victoria, Price had some very interesting things to say about what happens when we pass on. Did he ever express any of those sentiments to you?

No, not that I remember at all. I remember his wonderful cookery, of course, he was well known for being a great cook. ... I knew he was a good cook, so I must have gone for some meals at his house that he was maybe renting in London or something. And he was a brilliant art ex-

pert as well. Such a cultured man; he knew so much about the arts and so on, and again, at that age of 16 or 17, I was very, very impressed by that. But I don't remember him talking about anything to do with the afterlife, whatever. ... I always have loved reading horror stories, spooky kind of spiritual, weird, black magic type things, but I certainly don't believe in any of it. But it's always good fun to indulge in it in terms of entertainment.

So you mentioned Price's love of art. Can you elaborate on that?

I just know he was an art collector. I don't know more about it than that. I'm sure it will come into the biography you're reading, and in the '70s, he was quite well known I think, having such a good art collection. ... One tiny personal thing I know (now that she's been dead for some time), I think the marriage to Coral Browne was fairly unhappy. She was—I don't know how many of your readers will know the fact—she was an English actress, very witty, very acerbic, very brittly funny, but she could be very, very difficult as a personality, and I gather that their marriage... she was quite tough on him, I think, which is sad to think of, 'cause he was such a gentleman.

Do you think his work got in the way of family?

Well she was working flat out as well, so I don't suppose it was that, no. I think she just had a very dominant personality. But, I don't think I ever met them when they were actually together. I only worked with her after Vincent had died, and knew him, of course, long before he married her, so I'm not sure what the ins and outs of it were. But I didn't know enough about him personally to be able to say whether throughout his career it got in the way of family. I mean, as we all know, theater and film is a very difficult profession to be in. To keep a family life up at the same time, you have to be very aware of it, and I think in many cases it can be a problem.

Speaking of the art stuff, there's a bunch of pictures of you and Vincent on an "antiques hunt"...

[Laughs] Oh yeah, that rings a bell. That does ring a bell! I suspect that was a PR thing. [Laughs] I'm sure that would have been set up. "What can we get pictures of Vincent doing?" you know. "Oh, I know—Vincent's good at art and antiques." Yes, that rings a bell, but I can't tell you any more than that, and I suspect it was all pretty much of a setup.

Did they do a lot of that in those days, where you'd be sent off on a fake photo-shoot like that?

I think they always have, always will, won't they? I wouldn't say "fake." We probably did go and look at some antique shops, I expect, and then Vincent probably did make a few comments, and they always did try to think of something, some slightly different angle to get pictures of people, whether it's relaxing at home or something. ...



With a press photographer in tow, Vincent Price and Jane Asher embark on an "antiques hunt" through London, arranged by the studio publicity department during filming of *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964)





I'm surprised they didn't get Vincent cooking, for instance. They liked to do something a little bit away from the work just to hopefully get a bit of coverage.

Did you spend a lot of time like that off set?

No, no, not at all. No, I don't think we socialized much. I mean I was pretty young, so he may as well have been going out with the elder members of the cast, drinking, whatever, but I didn't, no.

What was your relationship on set like?

He was just very easy-going and very funny. He would joke a lot, extremely charming and very supportive to me, because he was an extremely well-known actor and, as a young girl, I was pretty much in awe of him, but he made it very easy and just a lot of fun, the whole thing. That's my main memory, that we all had a very good time. It's a very weird thing doing a horror film. I remember the moment where the crucifix by the bed turns into a pool of blood, I think. Well, of course you don't see that when you're acting it, you just have to look at this and make a little chalk mark where they want you to look, and you've

got to imagine the whole thing, so it's a bit of a weird process from start to finish.

What are your fondest memories of Vincent Price and what was his biggest influence on you?

Well, fondest memories I probably covered, in that it's really just being on set with such a charming—and I can't stress that enough. I know that actors are always saying, "Oh they're so wonderful and they're such darlings," but he really was a very charming gentleman. So my fondest memory, just him being so kind and so nice to me and being so supportive and looking after me at such a very young age. And his influence, oh, it's hard to say. I suppose he was extremely professional in the way he worked with the camera. I would love to think a bit of that seeped into me at that early age, I mean, I started in films when I was five, so I was already pretty experienced, but obviously still learning like crazy, and he was just so professional. The way he would be larking and joking around on the set, and then when it was time to turn over he would be right there, knew exactly what he was doing, and his

looks are so clever, of course. A lot of those Vincent Price films work so well not because of what he's saying, but the look that he would give before, after or during those lines is what absolutely makes it. I don't know... the acting work would have some sort of influence on me, like it or not, and I'd love to think that he perhaps infected me with just a tiny bit of his wonderful sense of humor and his professionalism.

While strictly not a horror film, Deep End is a horrifying film in its own way. How was it different to work on a film like that, as opposed to a straight horror genre piece like Masque of the Red Death?

Well, for one thing, a lot of *Deep End* was improvised, which I think you can probably tell, whereas *Masque of the Red Death* was pretty tightly scripted, because it was obviously a much bigger budget and had to be done absolutely to time and so on. With *Deep End*, because at that time Jerzy Skolimowski, who was of course the director and the writer, because he spoke very, very little English, the script was originally in rather strange form [laughs], a slightly impenetrable English. So we would go home in the evening and rewrite it and improvise some of it the next day, and so on. It was much more of a kind of collaborative film. I think everybody put a lot of ideas into *Deep End*, whereas with *Masque of the Red Death* it was, let's say, far more following the script. And, of course, being mostly on location, again *Deep End* had that more casual way of doing it, whereas *Masque of the Red Death* we had the brilliant Nick Roeg lighting it. He made it look so beautiful, so iconic, whereas with *Deep End* a lot of it was out of doors and we were sort of thinking on



the hoof, so a much more casual feeling. But I suppose whatever you work in, it's trying to—again, without being pretentious—it's trying to find the truth behind it. The

"The big difference Vincent brought to his films was the humor in the horror."

characters are completely different, of course. Francesca was extremely innocent, naïve and sort of faced with all this awful evil, whereas the character in *Deep End*, very much the opposite, very knowing, very sexually aware, manipulating the poor young man and knowing exactly what she was doing by using whatever sort of attraction she had for him, so just very, very different parts, very different characters. But again, it's the old "trying to find the truth behind it" that one works at.

Now that we've reached 100 years since the birth of Vincent Price, what's your sense of his legacy in film and in the horror genre in general?

I think it's very important. The big difference that he brought to his films was, I think, the humor in the horror, which has come back a lot in the last few years. I mean, there've been many more films over the last ten, fifteen years that bring humor into horror than there were, I think, in all those Hammer days when they were just pretty horrific. And Vince brought that humor to the films... definitely more than anybody else had up till then, so I think that was a huge influence on the whole genre. And his style, he brought such style to them. I think that probably affected a great deal the way that films were made after that, horror films. ... He absolutely believed what he was doing, but at the same time, there was a kind of knowing, humorous, slightly standing back from it. I mean a little bit like the way Roger Moore would play the Bond films... in that it was important that he caught this villain or whatever, but at the same time there was always that slightly wry, standing back and almost smiling at what he was doing, and I think Vincent had that same sort of quality.

It was an absolute pleasure speaking with you. Can I plug your cakes at all, or anything else you have coming up?

[Laughs] That's very sweet of you. Well it's theater in London, so it's not very useful to plug me over there [in the US], but that's very kind of you. Yes, maybe the cakes site. Unfortunately, we don't send our cakes overseas, but a great deal of mail-order of all the sugar craft things that people may want to bake at home, so that would be very useful. My website is JaneAsher.com, and we have probably the biggest selection of sugar craft and baking items anywhere in the world, so yeah, please ask your readers to have a look.

Interview by ROD WEBBER





a SLICE of PRICE



(1988)

ALTHOUGH PRICE'S OUTPUT lessened significantly during the 1980s, not only was he still working, but he performed some of his best-loved cameos during the decade; for example, appearing in cult kids' favourite *The Monster Club* in 1980, sending himself up in the British horror-comedy *Bloodbath at the House of Death* in 1983 and providing the famous *Thriller* voiceover in the same year. At the end of the decade, Price got involved with a zany horror project by the name of *Dead Heat*. It's a grimly cartoonish movie which takes two achingly 80s renegade cops and pitches them against corruption, Big Pharma and – well, zombies.

When Detectives Doug Bigelow (Joe Piscopo) and Roger Mortis (Treat Williams) wind up involved in a shoot-out at a failed jewel heist, they realise something is seriously wrong with their perpetrators: although they've only just been shot, it looks as though these guys have already been autopsied. They track down a chemical found in the bodies to one Dante Pharmaceuticals and, if the clue wasn't already in the name, they get in a lot of trouble when they go there to look around. Mortis is killed by an unknown someone, but together with the state coroner (Claire Kirkconnell) Bigelow manages to exploit technology in the Dante lab to bring Mortis back to life – at least for the short term. They set about finding Mortis's murderer by enlisting Dante P.R. girl Randi (Lindsay Frost) whose benefactor, the recently-deceased Arthur P. Loudermilk (Price), was responsible for funding many of the company's recent breakthroughs...

All of this sounds chaotic and it is: if *Dead Heat* can be compared to anything else, it's a cross between *Re-Animator* and *Beverly Hills Cop* – a riot of semi-automatic weapons, eye-popping shirts and explosions. In the midst of its wisecracks and the revived contents of a Chinese restaurant, though, there's the odd touch of poignancy. Price's brief role as Arthur Loudermilk – a man determined to use his influence to stave off ill-health and death forever – falls into that category, especially in light of his own failing health at that juncture. Shortly after

the completion of the film Price had a pacemaker fitted, received thyroid treatment and was labouring more and more under the affliction of arthritis, a fact which can be seen in the way he moves during his screen-time. The relish with which he plays the part of Loudermilk, then, reflects upon his own condition: there's a real joy in the way he declares "God wants us to live forever!" Equally, his dismay when his plans are thwarted seems heartfelt, coming from an ageing man who, after everything, cannot after all control his own destiny. In the midst of the black comedy (and the type of splattery gore which Price would no doubt have privately considered went beyond the bounds of good taste) *Dead Heat* still has the capacity for pathos. As Loudermilk leaves the room, his dreams in ruins, you feel for him, and you feel for Price.

by KERI O'SHEA

AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD WATCHES



BLOODBATH AT THE House of Death was critically panned upon its release in 1984; however, to an eight-year-old watching the film on cable TV, the film was terrifying. For instance, in the opening scene, several black-garbed, satanic monks run into a mansion (Headstone Manor) and immediately massacre the eighteen inhabitants by hanging, axing, and dismembering them.

You might be asking, "Who in the world would let a child watch this film?" For many summer days, I would be relentlessly bored, hanging out at my grandmother's house where my recently divorced dad lived with her and my uncle. While my grandmother slowly succumbed to emphysema, forever doomed to roll around an oxygen tank, yet still continuing to chain smoke, my father and uncle would go off fishing, or be repairing the boat or one of the cars in the yard. Or they were at the pub picking up women. Or whatever it was that they did, leaving me to the faint blue glow of the television.

This isn't to say I was a completely neglected child;

I much preferred my other grandmother's house, where there was a black cat I could play with, a swing set in the yard, and an endless supply of ice-cream sandwiches, frozen pizza, and homemade chicken cutlets and spaghetti. At either residence, however, I watched Vincent Price whenever I could, whether camping it up "egg-ceptionally" on the *Batman* TV series, hosting *Mystery!* (and adoring the spooky, Edward Gorey animation sequences), menacing *The Brady Bunch* in Hawaii, or in any film I could set my little eyes on.

So when I saw a movie starring ol' Vinnie coming up on that dry, hot day, I rejoiced and settled in. Any expectations for what I was about to see were blown away, starting with the grand massacre opening scene; it was the most gore I'd seen since spying on my parents watching *American Werewolf* in London on HBO. As for *Bloodbath*, I recall such macabre things as blood dripping on an investigator's head; the camera then panned up to reveal a body hanging from the house. Someone else later in the film answered a phone and a spike promptly shot through the mouthpiece and through the person's head. The most shocking recollection? A teddy bear found beneath a woman's bed. She finds it, thinks it's cute and comforting (as most do), and lays it next to her. Now imagine an absolutely stunned child watching as this teddy bear starts moving, a large metal spike coming out of the paw. Of course, murder ensues.

Imagine my surprise when just recently, I found out that *Bloodbath at the House of Death* is a horror spoof, a comedy! Sounds like a bad one, too, filled with profanities and sex (not that I mind), and even Vincent going up in flames as he conjures up Satan. Nonetheless, I need to see it again. Last night, I asked my friends on Facebook if they know where I can see the film again, as it's long out of print, and was told that Vincent Price's ghost should have a restraining order against me. Call it morbid curiosity, a replacement for a grandfather that never existed, or just a need to surmount a strange patch of childhood trauma. Call it missing Vinnie.

by MICHELE "IZZY" GALGANA





THE PRICE OF INFIDELITY VINCENT PRICE in THE PRICE OF FEAR

AS A MEDIA lecturer I have noticed that many teenagers today struggle with the concept of radio drama. In fact speech radio in general is anathema to them. Words without pictures is just not in their frame of reference, perhaps because it is not stimulating enough of all of their senses to fully engage them, which is a great pity. They even struggle with radio comedy, no matter how funny a particular show may be. They simply cannot bring themselves to laugh. They appear to have been conditioned through years of television, film and YouTube to only accepting moving pictures for their entertainment. When I play some in the classroom they struggle to maintain their attention for longer than around two minutes, which given that your average radio show is twenty-eight minutes, is not that great. I do my best to give them an education into what it is they have been missing, but it really is an uphill struggle. For someone whose formative years mostly consisted of collecting *Monty Python* and *Goon Show* records, whilst staying up late to watch classic horror double-bills, this is a state of mind that is difficult to relate to.

I first became aware of *The Price of Fear* several years ago, when someone on a Peter Cushing email group posted a link to 'The Man Who Hated Scenes', which was available to listen to on the digital station BBC7's website. I was determined to work out how to download this so I could keep it forever. I scoured the Internet looking for ways to do this, and it took me a week to finally figure out (the

solution was to use Audacity). Sadly as the show was only available for seven days, by the time my method was in place it had gone! However, I dutifully recorded the rest of the series, and thus began my quest to amass hundreds of hours of classic radio on my hard drive. Eventually the series was repeated and I got myself a copy of that first episode that had turned me onto the series to begin with.

Vincent Price was as well known for his voice as he was for his distinctive looks. He had starred in dozens of radio dramas throughout his career, perhaps most notably playing Simon Templar in *The Saint* on American radio during the late 1940s and 1950s. In the 1970s Price was persuaded to present a new horror anthology show tailored specifically to him. *The Price of Fear* was produced by the BBC, and Price was able to fit in recordings for the three series whilst he was in the UK filming. The series began in 1973, with further recordings made in 1975 and 1982, totalling twenty-two shows in all. (It appears that some of these shows are no longer in the BBC archive, as only fifteen are used when the series is played on BBC Radio 4 Extra (formerly BBC7). [though the rest are available online – with the possible exception of 'Never Gamble With A Laser'. Ed.]).

Price acts as both narrator and participant in the stories. Although towards the end he was often relegated to just presenting the tale and summing up at the end, like Rod Serling in *The Twilight Zone*, for the most part each tale was presented as though the events occurred to Price himself. The shows are revealing of the kind of world Price moved in at that time, or at least the world he wanted the public to believe he moved in. The settings and situations do serve to reinforce the erudite, art and food-loving aesthete we believed the real Vincent Price to be. A lot of the stories begin with him relating some extraordinary coincidence. He often bumps into old friends and passing acquaintances on his travels, whether he's eating in an Australian restaurant, passing through a French airport or perusing an auction hall. Price lives in a 1970s world of perennial dinner parties, and if he's not seeing old friends in person, he's reminded of an occasion that sends him into almost Proustian flights of macabre fancy.

The main theme throughout most of the shows seems to be that of domesticity, and forces from within, or without, threatening to disrupt a previously harmonious arrangement. In Vincent Price's circle of friends and acquaintances, wives are rarely faithful to their husbands, and the horrors that come about as a result of whatever vengeance is enacted are thought to be deserved. Price himself never passes judgment on the poor unfortunate souls caught up in these terribly complicated and tragic events. "Look out!" they seem to be saying. If you are unfaithful you can't expect sympathy when you are found

out. Only in Vincent's world it's not the divorce lawyers that are called in, but the morticians.

In *'Come As You Are'*, Vinnie is invited to a costume party by an old friend. Whilst trying to hide away from the badly behaving party goers he finds himself talking to a man who is also hiding out on the stairs. The man relates the story of his wife's affair, and how he dressed as a ghost to try and frighten her to death, only for the midnight adventure to backfire fatally. Instead of causing her own death, she sees his reflection in a mirror and attacks it, lacerating himself and bleeding to death. Price has spent the evening talking to a ghost. It certainly explains why he wasn't willing to shake hands.

'The Family Album' features Maurice Denham as Arthur, described as "an ordinary, ordinary man" who collects antiques and one day brings home an unusual old photo album. He suspects his best friend Harry is sleeping with his wife Rose and sets in motion a plan to destroy them both, going to such lengths as to fake his own death. The tale ends when Harry is blasted by a shotgun-toting Arthur, appearing to be back from the grave.

One of the later stories, *'To My Dear, Dear Saladin'*, stars Edward Woodward and Annette Crosby, and has the dysfunctional relationship reversed, in that a dominant, money-grabbing husband has a suitable revenge enacted upon him, this time from a vengeful cat. Price does not skirt over the gory details as he relates how Woodward's body is discovered in the cellar, having been partially eaten by the moggy in question. His wife does not seem too upset. The tables were also turned in *'William and Mary'*, one of the many adaptations of the short story by Roald Dahl. William leaves his brain to medical science, where he is kept alive with one eye attached, in a basin. A tyrant during his life, his wife sees an opportunity to get her own back on him when she is first introduced to his new incarnation, and it begins with her smoking, something he always disapproved of, and she laughs as she knows she can do anything she likes now and he can't do anything about it except watch.

One of the most well-known episodes stars a very timid Peter Cushing, and it's terrific to hear these two greats working together. They starred together in a fascinating science fiction six-parter on BBC radio, *Aliens In The Mind*, a few years later. In *'The Man Who Hated Scenes'*, Cushing is a man of independent means who Price happens to meet whilst travelling by train from Los Angeles to New York. Over breakfast Cushing begins to talk about his beautiful young wife, a former champion swimmer and exhibition diver. He found her whilst on holiday in Florida, and after a short engagement they were married and back in his remote mansion house in California, complete with a pool. Due to the state of his nerves, it only

takes the slightest hint of a "scene" to send him into an almost comatose paralysed state, so you can imagine how he reacted when his wife confronted him with the news that she is bored, feeling trapped in this palatial prison of his. When he comes round a few weeks later, having been at death's door, she appears to have had a change of heart. She has also sacked all the staff and hired a new chauffeur, who is young and handsome. It doesn't take a genius to work out what's going on here. He discovers that the two of them take midnight swims in the dark, afraid of being caught so not even the underwater lights in the pool are switched on. That's not all of course. He watches them have sex by the pool, after having heard them discuss their past together. The marriage is a sham, and she is merely waiting for Cushing to die off so she and her real true love can take the house and the money. Instead of having a relapse, Cushing's character has a moment of clarity. Knowing how much he hates scenes, he can't simply confront them both. So the next day, whilst they are both out, he drains the swimming pool. That night, their midnight diving session comes to a somewhat abrupt, bone-crunching end.

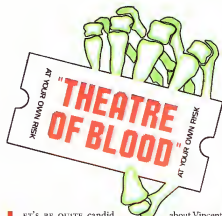
In another occasion on a train, this time in England, Price meets a blind man who relates how he enacted revenge on a man who has moved into his house and proceeded to torment him, destroying his memories of his mother. His creative revenge involves first drugging the man, then sewing his eyelids shut and locking him in the cellar. Whereas most men would run to the nearest policeman, Price never appears to be shocked, and certainly never passes judgment on the murderers he seemed to meet on a regular basis, even when, like in the story *Fish*, he is a key witness to the murder itself.

Occasionally nature provides the dramatic and horrific interruption to an otherwise idyllic domestic arrangement. In *'An Eye For An Eye'* Price is invited to dinner onboard the boat of Luigi, a rich Italian Count. The Count specialises in searching out the greatest new flavour experiences, and this time he thinks he has it. After several delicious entrées, the main course is unveiled. It is live octopus on a bed of rice and fish; a new gastronomic trend. To prove to "Vincenzo" that it can feel no pain, Luigi pops out one of its eyes with a spoon. Price feels it's watching him, and has to decline trying this new dish. Later on we are given a deliciously gory and visceral description of Luigi's end, his head having been crushed in his sleep by a giant octopus, and one of his own eyes sucked out. Price relates the grizzly conclusions to his tales with barely concealed relish. There may be a lesson to learn from what he tells, but he's going to let us figure it out for ourselves.

The quality of the writing in each episode puts it above many of the other horror anthology radio shows

out there, but it is primarily for the participation of Vincent Price that keeps you coming back to this show. Price developed the perfect combination of wit, sophistication and sinister foreboding that became his stock in trade throughout the latter years of his career, and it is none more succinctly delivered than in these half hour chunks of relationship counselling and bloodshed.

by ADRIAN SMITH



LET'S BE QUITE candid about Vincent Price's acting style (and I say style, not ability) — he was an out-and-out ham. Under a particularly gifted director, he could produce a more serious, subdued performance, of course. *Witchfinder General* (Michael Reeves, 1968) is the most notable example. For the most part, however, Price was a larger-than-life presence on the screen, fond of exaggerated gesticulation and over-the-top delivery of lines. In his most celebrated films, the overacting served him well.

In the seventies, Price began to parody this camp tendency, and never more than in the trio of films he made in Britain between 1971 and 1973: *The Abominable Dr Phibes*, *Dr Phibes Rises Again* and *Theatre of Blood*. In the first Phibes film, he played a disfigured organist who takes revenge on the surgeons who failed to save his wife by subjecting them to his ingenious recreations of the biblical plagues on Egypt. (The deliberately absurd tone seemed lost on *Time Out* critic David Pirie, who rather humourlessly denounced it at the time as "perhaps the worst horror film made in England since 1945.")¹ In the sequel, Phibes picked off his enemies one by one with a

similarly dramatic series of tortures. Then, in *Theatre of Blood*, he was Edward Lionheart, a stage actor, presumed dead, who borrows death scenes from Shakespeare to exact his revenge on the critics he blames for killing his career. It's a *Grand Guignol*-style variation on the Phibes idea, but it stands out for its unique intertwining of Price's persona with that of the central character.

Lionheart is a relic, an old-fashioned thespian once popular for a highly theatrical style of acting by now outmoded and damned by critics. Film and literary scholar Peter Hutchings describes *Theatre of Blood* as

... an elegy for a lost style of Shakespearean drama, a style that involves approaching the films as barnstorming melodramas and one which is characterized by a reliance on non-naturalistic forms of acting within extreme situations, on scenes that emphasize pathos, cruelty and suffering, and on the presentation of wrongs done and of wrongs righted.²

Lionheart's own murderous actions are ironically self-reflexive, turning his theatrical craft to malevolent purposes to butcher his enemies. But there's a self-reflexive element to the film itself, too, for Price represents an old style of horror movie that, by 1973, was well on its way out. It was the year of *The Exorcist*, a serious and scary drama that treated the supernatural like the stuff of documentary, not melodrama. The old school Gothic horror film had been declining for years, and traditional horror produc-



ers like Britain's Hammer Films were fighting against the trends, finding it increasingly difficult to compete with the new universe brought to birth, arguably, in Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968).

Hutchings notes that even director Douglas Hickox's approach is decidedly old-fashioned, "eschewing the subjective camerawork and fragmented narrative structures" common in genre films of the time. Nor is there evidence of "youth in revolt," a popular horror theme of the time,

2 Peter Hutchings, "Theatres of blood: Shakespeare and the horror film" in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis & Dale Townshend, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008)

1 David Pirie, *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema, 1945-1972*, (London: Gordon Fraser, 1973)



with *Lionheart*'s daughter (Diana Rigg) presented as a "model of filial devotion" likened to Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

So the movie is effectively a double joke—*Lionheart* defiantly turns his beloved but waning style of theatre into a weapon with which to destroy his critics, while Price gives a tongue-in-cheek FU to a genre that is quickly making his own style obsolete. It might very well be seen as his swansong, for after *Theatre of Blood*, the actor's horror features consisted mostly of far inferior attempts at this kind of self-parody, such as *Madhouse* (1974), *The Monster Club* (1980) and *House of the Long Shadows* (1983).

In 2005, London theatre company Improbable recognized the genius of *Theatre of Blood* and co-produced a stage adaptation with the National Theatre. Jim Broadbent was cast as *Lionheart*—one need only watch him as the showman Harold Zidler in *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) to see how adept he is at the kind of the overblown theatricality needed for the part—and, in yet another self-reflexive twist, Rachael Stirling was *Lionheart*'s daughter, a role played in the original film by her mother, Diana Rigg.

Improbable and the National Theatre retained the seventies setting, for this was the decade in which the concrete National Theatre complex itself was erected on the South Bank of the Thames. The oft-criticized building and its context in the history of British theatre were the butt of jokes throughout the play, which is set as the NT is preparing to open. The critics in the supporting cast represented real British rags of the period, such as *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Evening Standard*. Ironically, however, the production itself received a mixed response, with some reviewers complaining that the play was apparently so self-reflexive, the industry in-jokes went over the

heads of audience members unfamiliar with the context.

Undoubtedly, Price knew he symbolized a generation in horror that was becoming a quaint relic. But let's not assume there was any bitterness behind *Theatre of Blood*'s tongue-in-cheek lament for the passing of an era. Price was not afraid to laugh at himself; his unique status as a pop culture icon in commercials, music videos and kids' cartoons is testament to that. "The last thing my father was was a snob," Price's daughter Victoria told the *Riverfront Times* earlier this year. "He understood that popular culture was an incredibly powerful force. He had fun."

And fun was certainly what he had treading the boards as *Edward Lionheart* in the film that, arguably, contained more of the real Vincent Price than any other in the inimitable ham's screen career.

by DAVID L. RATTIGAN



3 Aimee Levitt, "Back from the Undead: Happy 100th to homegrown horror icon Vincent Price" in *Riverfront Times*, May 19 2011



Candid shot of Vincent Price taking a cigarette break during filming of *Theater of Blood* (1973)



R
e
-
e
m

Like it?
Buy it!!